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## **Entrepreneurial roles, creativity and play**

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**ABSTRACT:**

Previous research has defined diverse entrepreneurial identity roles. Although the division between these roles is clear, the impact of these roles on entrepreneurial ventures and the daily actions of entrepreneurs is yet rather ambiguous. Further, creativity and play are essential components of entrepreneurship. This derives from the significant influence creativity and play have on the emergence of innovation which is essential in entrepreneurship. However, since creativity and playfulness are not well-acknowledged in an organizational context nor in entrepreneurship as such, this study aims to increase the knowledge of creativity and play as a mediator to increase entrepreneurial emergence. The present Master's thesis thus focuses on the relationship between entrepreneurial identity roles, creativity and play. The purpose of the study is to find out which types of creativity and play different entrepreneurial identity roles may invoke.

The study was conducted through an exploratory research utilizing qualitative research methodologies to analyze the findings of semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted to gain the insights of five entrepreneurs and their subjective approach to different types of creativity and play which they utilize in their daily entrepreneurial endeavors. In order to analyze the impact of entrepreneurial identity role on the reported types of creativity and play, the interviewees were asked which one of the roles (1) *inventor identity*, (2) *founder identity*, and (3) *developer identity* would best describe them.

The findings of the study suggest that there are some connections between the types of creativity and play invoked by particular entrepreneurial identity roles. The study was able to define the source of motivation related to each entrepreneurial identity role. Moreover, the study distinguished degrees of proactive and responsive creativity between the roles. In terms of play, the study reconciled the purpose of play which different roles are likely to utilize. Further, the study determined different types of play and was able to define which entrepreneurial identity role is likely to exploit certain types of play. However, since entrepreneurs may relate to several entrepreneurial identity roles at the same time, it is challenging to determine specific types of creativity and play invoked by a certain entrepreneurial identity role. Moreover, since creativity and play, as concepts, are rather scarcely utilized in the daily endeavors of entrepreneurs, more research should be conducted to increase the knowledge of the influences of these on entrepreneurial performance.

This study contributes to the research on entrepreneurial identity roles with the perspective of creativity and play. Moreover, the study increases the practical insights of the variety of entrepreneurial identity roles.

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**KEYWORDS:** entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial roles, creativity, play

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# 1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the types of creativity and play that entrepreneurial roles invoke. Creativity and play are essential components of entrepreneurship. Hjorth describes “entrepreneurship as a tactical art of creating spaces for play (heterotopias)” (Hjorth 2005: 388). “The tactical art of creating” refers to the duality of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is about ‘creating’ something novel and innovative which differs from the existing status and rules. On the other hand, entrepreneurship has a ‘tactical’ aspect which reflects the condition of an innovation having to be both original, but moreover accepted and valued by its audience. With ‘space for play’ Hjorth refers to the state of mind in which established realities are viewed from a disparate perspective and comprised as something to be transformed. Whereas creativity refers to “novelty and originality combined with notions of utility and value” (Kleiman 2008: 209), play fulfils its role as a “threshold between reality and unreality” (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 94). Previous research has indicated that both creativity and play have essential roles in entrepreneurship, and moreover, a strong influence on each other as well. However, there is yet a lack of more precise information on what types of creativity and play different entrepreneurial roles invoke.

This thesis utilizes entrepreneurial role identities; (1) *inventor identity*, (2) *founder identity*, and (3) *developer identity* determined by Cardon, Wincent, Singh, and Drnovsek (2009: 516). The study analyzes different entrepreneurial role identities as well as the activities, behaviors, motives, and perspectives which are characteristic for each identity. The thesis has chosen to focus on different entrepreneurial identity roles in order to increase the knowledge of the whole variety of entrepreneurship. In addition, creativity and play are acknowledged to be substantial antecedents to entrepreneurship. Therefore, the thesis compares the differences between certain entrepreneurial identity roles and the types of creativity and play these roles may invoke. Since previous research has distinguished different entrepreneur identity roles and discovered that entrepreneurs may embrace many identities simultaneously as well as identify themselves with several

characteristics (Cardon et al. 2009: 517), it is interesting and relevant to consider which types of creativity and play accompany diverse entrepreneurial role identities.

### **1.1 Positioning and purpose**

Entrepreneurial identity roles, creativity and play were chosen as the focal points of the thesis because previous research has indicated that both creativity and play have essential roles in entrepreneurship. This derives from the significant influence creativity and play have on the emergence of innovation which is essential in entrepreneurship. Moreover, the study of Cardon et al. (2009) has distinguished entrepreneurial identity roles and the actions and behaviors these roles typically employ. However, previous research has not clarified on how do these roles affect the types of creativity and play leaving the relationship between entrepreneurial identity roles, creativity and play ambiguous. This study seeks to fill in this research gap by clarifying the relationship between these concepts. Further, since creativity and playfulness are not well-acknowledged in an organizational context nor in entrepreneurship as such, this study aims to increase the knowledge of creativity and play as a mediator to increase entrepreneurial emergence.

Entrepreneurship and creativity are considered as challenging to generate and manage. Moreover, these two concepts incorporate a chance of coincidence or fortune, which occur in a haphazard way and are difficult to manufacture artificially. One can establish a fertile environment for entrepreneurial and creative ideas to bloom by providing ideal resources and a free mindset equipped with imagination, yet it cannot be taken for granted that this will generate any innovations. Moreover, the relationship between entrepreneurship and creativity is ambiguous especially on a micro level. Previous research has focused more on the connection between entrepreneurship and creativity in terms of major detached innovations rather than on the creativity that entrepreneurs discharge daily in order to keep their business profitable. (Weinberger, Wach, Stephan & Wegge 2018: 3.)

When it comes to play, it is a rather novel area in the organizational context, in the distance of an entrenched format, and has not yet obtained much attention in the research literature. Similarly, Proyer and Ruch (2011: 1) emphasize that whereas the aspect of personal characteristic in playfulness has attained some attention from the researchers, playfulness in adulthood has been neglected. In this thesis, play and playfulness are utilized as equal terms. In order to diminish the conception of play belonging merely to children's development process, it is necessary to increase the knowledge of how playfulness may encourage creativity, promote innovation, and therefore benefit businesses by improving organizational outcomes. Although few companies have acknowledged the power of play in encouraging creativity and promoting organizational outcomes, the majority of companies still consider play irrelevant to their main reason for existence (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 83). Similarly, in entrepreneurship, play is yet an unknown concept although its contribution to entrepreneurial innovativeness is likely to be substantial. However, from the organizational perspective alone entrepreneurial mindset and creative thinking have been considered pivotal in development and competition since these functions are affiliated with organizational outcomes and successfulness. Due to the extraordinary feature of entrepreneurship as a relatively imaginative and innovative area of business, the thesis acknowledges play as a strong spark to creativity and further to novel and distinct innovations

Although the organizational aspect of the relationship between entrepreneurship, creativity, and play is undoubtedly momentous for various reasons, this study approaches the topic from another significant perspective of entrepreneurial roles. Kirzner (2009) has indicated the substantial influence of successful entrepreneurship on the well-being of the economy, development of new innovations, as well as financial growth. In addition, Kirzner highlights the importance of identifying certain personality traits which can be affiliated with entrepreneurial success and further supporting the environmental factors which incorporate a fruitful premise for entrepreneurial emergence. (Kirzner 2009: 145.) Approaching the variety of creativity and play with the less-noted point of view of different entrepreneurial roles, generates needful information of entrepreneurs as individuals.



The purpose of the study is to discuss more precisely the differences between entrepreneurial identity roles within the context of creativity and play.

The framework of the study centralizes on two aspects of entrepreneurship. First of all, it acknowledges and elaborates on different entrepreneurial roles. Despite the fact that every entrepreneur is unique and has his or her own professional identity and entrepreneurial ambition, entrepreneurial roles as an umbrella term can be further considered in the aim of increasing awareness of the human aspect of entrepreneurship. Secondly, the study considers two influential factors; creativity and play – which have an immediate effect on entrepreneurial action – as the other focal point of the framework. Further, it is feasible to research which types of creativity and play different entrepreneurial roles invoke. The type of the industry, business model, life stage of the product, and future scenario for the business development are all factors that are likely to have an influence on the entrepreneurial approach. In addition, the inherent identity of an entrepreneur has an effect on the entrepreneurial outcomes. Cardon et al. state that the embraced identity motivates entrepreneurs to become attracted and passionate by specific activities more than some others. This may in turn steer entrepreneurs towards entrepreneurial endeavors and positions where they are driven mostly by their intrinsic motivation, can utilize their skills and express their personality through the set of their actions. (Cardon et al. 2009: 516.) Consequently, it is relevant to discuss the possible differences in entrepreneurial actions within the context of different entrepreneurial roles. In order to narrow down a specific scope, and due to the importance of the two influential factors, the study focuses on the types of creativity and play that distinct entrepreneurial identity roles may invoke.

The main purpose of the study is to increase knowledge of the features of various entrepreneurial roles. In other words, the study considers how certain entrepreneurial identity roles may affect the variety of utilized creative and playful actions. The study discusses whether distinct entrepreneurial identity roles provoke certain types of creative and playful actions. Moreover, it is relevant to consider certain stages of the

entrepreneurial process such as “innovation, triggering event, implementation, and growth” (Bygrave 2004: 3) in the light of different types of creativity and play. By considering different stages, the thesis provides additional data of the entrepreneurial process from the entrepreneur’s perspective. Deliberating different entrepreneurial stages when assessing the changes in the types of creativity and play is relevant since certain phases in the entrepreneurial emergence require diverse actions and therefore distinct entrepreneurial identities may be required. Despite the fact that the influence of entrepreneurship, creativity, and play in fostering each other has been indicated to a certain extent, the relationship between these three angles of a triangle is yet ambiguous. In order to better illustrate the involvement between the distinct factors, this study utilizes an imaginary ‘triangle’ as a metaphor to the relationship. Moreover, previous research has not yet considered the effect of different entrepreneurial roles on the types of creativity and play. Therefore, the study employs this perspective and elaborates on the research of entrepreneurial identity roles.

## 1.2 The research question

The research question of the thesis is “Which types of creativity and play entrepreneur identity roles invoke?”. Considering the differences between entrepreneur identity roles, the thesis aims to discover which types of creativity and play these roles might be prone to employ. Previous research has defined differences in the identity roles that entrepreneurs identify themselves with. Although the primary differences between these roles are recognized, there is still little knowledge available about the approaches and practices these entrepreneur identity roles typically embrace. Since creativity and play are essential parts of entrepreneurship, this study has concluded to focus on different varieties of creativity and play yielded by different entrepreneur identity roles. Therefore, the underlying purpose of this study is to analyze the types of creativity and play which entrepreneur identity roles might invoke. In order to answer to the research question, the thesis considers *inventor*, *founder*, and *developer* as the main entrepreneurial identity roles and utilizes existing literature in discovering allusions that different

entrepreneurial roles and stages of the entrepreneurial process may invoke various types of creativity and play. Therefore, the research objective is to test the theory of Cardon et al. and further discover how does the division of entrepreneurs in the three categories of inventor, founder and developer proceed in practice among a group of entrepreneurs.

In order to provide a more practical depiction of the forms of creativity and play in relation to different entrepreneurial roles, the thesis conducts an interview with five entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs consist of a group of three woman and two male entrepreneurs from different fields of business. The interviews enable a more substantial analysis of the effect of an entrepreneur's identity in the variety of creativity and play. Moreover, the thesis centralizes on the effects of entrepreneurial identity roles on different types of play and creativity in a micro context, meaning that the focus is on these influences on a daily level. Other objectives of the study are to consider the prerequisites for creativity, clarify how creativity may be increased, and to determine the purpose of play in entrepreneurship. The purpose of these other objectives is to increase knowledge of how entrepreneurs consider creativity and play in their daily entrepreneurial endeavors.

### **1.3 Outline**

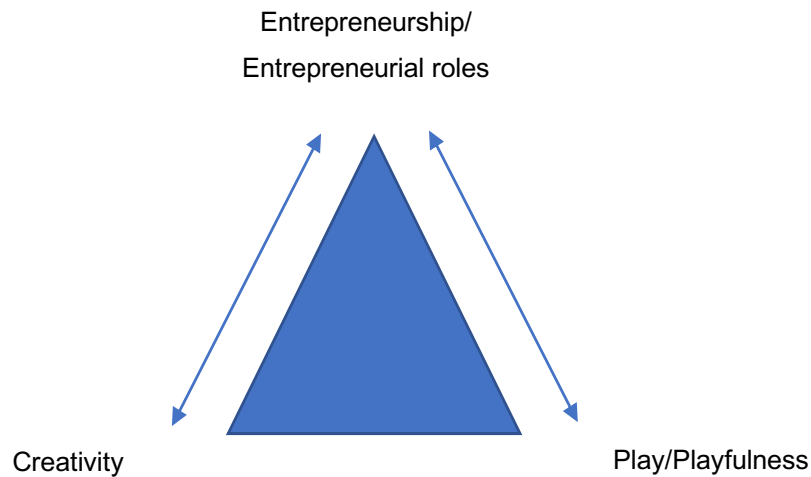
The thesis provides a profound review on entrepreneur identity roles as well as on which types of creativity and play these roles invoke. In order to achieve its objective, the thesis begins with analyzing the relationships between entrepreneurship, creativity and play. By carefully observing and interpreting various approaches to the 'triangle' the thesis aims to present new aspects of entrepreneurship, creativity and play. The thesis indicates the significance between the factors of the triangle by introducing prevailing theories and definitions through profound literature overviews on entrepreneurship, creativity and play. In order to provide a more in-depth description of the types of creativity and play which entrepreneurs with different entrepreneurial identity roles employ, the study utilizes data from five semi-structured interviews. Prior to introducing empirical findings, the thesis justifies the selected research methodologies to explain how the

research question will be answered. Following an in-dept discussion part, the thesis analyzes which types of creativity and play different entrepreneurial roles invoke. Within the chosen perspectives of creativity and play, the thesis presents the relationship between different entrepreneur identity roles and creativity as well as play in the light of the presented literature. The benefits of this thesis are to reduce the knowledge gap and provide more relevant and correct information of entrepreneur identity roles. Further, novel insights of entrepreneur identity roles and the utilization of different types of creativity and play contribute to the existing research and serve a fresh approach to entrepreneurship studies. Lastly, the thesis provides an outlook and proposals for future research within the topic.

## 2 Triangle as a starting point

The thesis's premise is a fictitious triangle-shaped configuration (see Figure 1) of the relationships between entrepreneurship/entrepreneur identity roles and creativity as well as with play/playfulness. In addition, the triangle depicts another relationship between creativity and play. Moreover, this triangle illustrating the relationships between the essential themes constitutes the phenomenon of the thesis. Whereas creativity and play have been proven to have essential roles in evoking entrepreneurship, it is relevant to observe also the connection between creativity and play and discuss how these two accompany each other. Later in the study, the purpose of the triangle is to illustrate the focal points of the study and draw attention also to entrepreneur identity roles and to the types of creativity and play these roles invoke. In the following subheadings the thesis will consider each relationship of the triangle successively. On top of the triangle there are the concepts of both 'entrepreneurship' as well as 'entrepreneurial roles'. The study approaches this division by first considering entrepreneurship as an umbrella term and analyzing the relationship between entrepreneurship and creativity, followed by the analysis of the relationship between creativity and play. As the third dimension of the triangle, the thesis specifies the relationship between entrepreneurship and play.

Further, the entrepreneurial identity roles are considered more carefully in the discussion part. Entrepreneurial identity roles are utilized in order to provide more personal and human approach to entrepreneurial action. Further, to set a clear framework to implement this intention, creativity and play are chosen to serve as the point of views to this analysis. The relationships within the triangle are relevant due to their implication for innovativeness. On one hand the similarity and overlap of entrepreneurship, creativity, and play arouses interest in taking a closer look on this dynamic combination. On the other hand, the fact that there is a great disparity between the factors increases the preoccupation of clarifying the course of action within the triangle. After describing carefully, the relationships constituting the triangle, it is possible to enter into the research question and analyze the impact of different entrepreneurial roles on evoking various types of creativity and play.

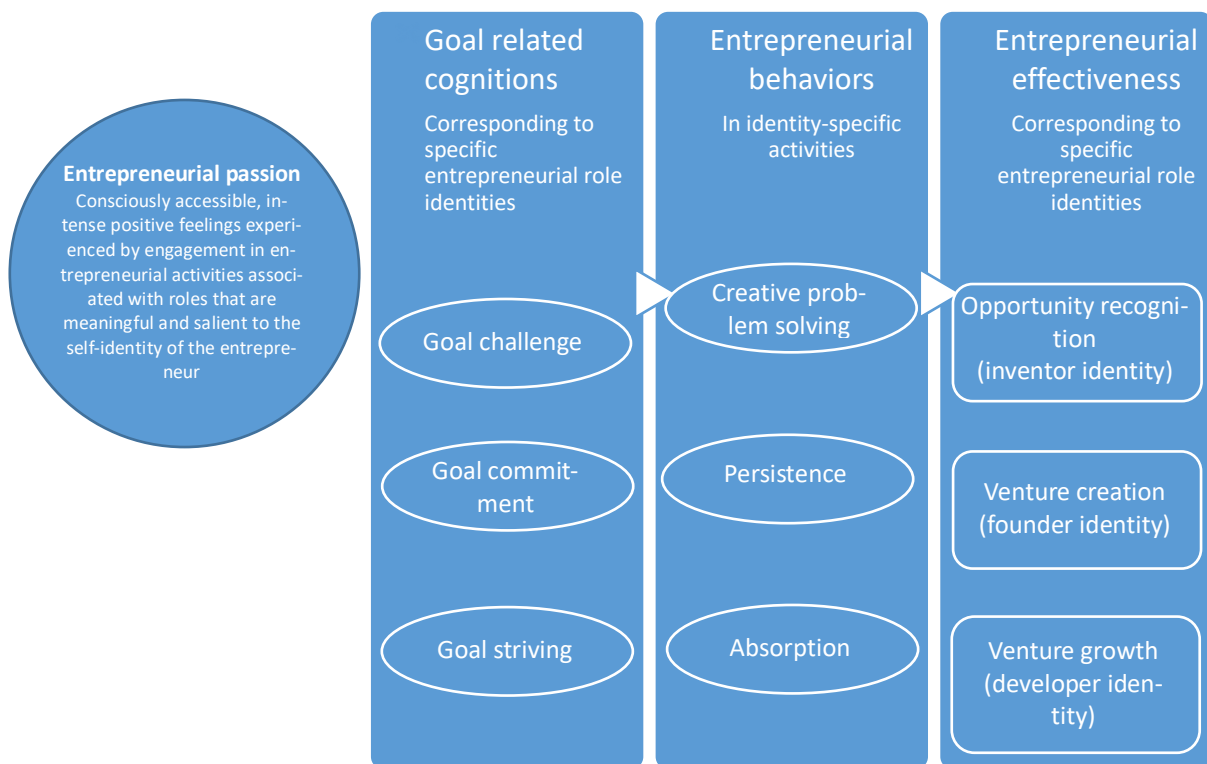


**Figure 1.** The 'triangle' of key relationships.

## 2.1 Entrepreneurial identity roles

A conceptual model of the experience of entrepreneurial passion (Figure 3) by Cardon et al. (2009) explains this more precisely. The model consists of four different circles presenting entrepreneurial passion in the left-most circle. Moving towards right the next circle indicates goal-related cognitions such as goal challenge, goal commitment and goal striving. Entrepreneurial behaviors are introduced in the next circle consisting of creative problem solving, persistence and absorption. The right-most circle presents entrepreneurial effectiveness through the actions of opportunity recognition, venture creation and venture growth. The proposed process is triggered by an entrepreneurial passion and results in entrepreneurial outcomes. Cardon et al. (2009) further explain that the model supports the division between the three entrepreneurial identity roles presented previously by distinguishing engagement in different activities characteristic for each role. Indicators of entrepreneurial outcomes are suggested as plausible although not absolute outcomes of these identities. Cardon et al. (2009) propose that when an entrepreneur can identify him- or herself with one of these roles and become motivated by the entrepreneurial passion, a course of actions is expected to occur. Further, this process continues with goal-related functions which are supported by entrepreneurial behaviors. (Cardon et al. 2009: 518.) In addition, the authors argue that these cognitions

and behaviors materialize as creative problem solving (discovering new and valuable ideas), persistence (showing great perseverance in accomplishing a task despite of any hardship, failures, and challenges) and absorption (being completely immersed in what one is doing). As the final outcome of the model, it suggests that opportunity recognition relates to inventor identity, venture creation links up with founder identity, and venture growth consolidates with developer identity. (Cardon et al. 2009: 518 – 520.)



**Figure 2.** A conceptual model of the experience of entrepreneurial passion (Cardon et al. 2009:519).

This model is a salient theoretical framework for the study since it explicates the process of entrepreneurial activity considering the variation between distinct entrepreneurial identity roles. Also, this model provides explanation to the fact that some entrepreneurs feel mostly passionate about their entrepreneurial endeavors whereas others have a rather cognitive and prudent approach towards their pursuits (Cardon et al. 2009: 526).

Since the main purpose of this study is to analyze which types of creativity and play different entrepreneurial roles invoke, the conceptual model of the experience of entrepreneurial passion offers important information to consider these variations. Cardon et al. claim that changes in the experienced passion of entrepreneurs are likely to happen because of the certain stages the entrepreneurial pursuit goes through. (2009: 526). As mentioned before, it is likely that the entrepreneurial identity roles go hand in hand with the entrepreneurial process. Cardon et al. (2009) state that typically in the early stages of an entrepreneurial process, such as innovation and discovering a certain niche in the market, an inventor identity is mostly activated. Whereas later in the process, such as in the actual implementation stage or even further in the development and growth stages, founder and developer identities are most likely to be present. According to Cardon et al. (2009) it is possible for some entrepreneurs to develop and adapt to the certain stages of the entrepreneurial process and therefore shift from one role to another. In turn, other entrepreneurs are more permanent with their identity roles and rather relinquish their business to followers than try to adapt to a role in which they do not feel the most comfortable and competent. (Cardon et al. 2009: 526 – 527.) In the following chapters the thesis analyzes which types of creativity and play different entrepreneurial roles invoke

## **2.2 Entrepreneurship – creativity**

The first discussed relationship within the triangle is between entrepreneurship and creativity. Fillis and Rentschler define entrepreneurship “as the process of creating value for business and social communities by bringing together unique combinations of public and private resources to exploit economic, social or cultural opportunities in an environment of change” (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 50). This definition includes the key factors in entrepreneurship. First of all, the essence of entrepreneurship is to create value. Moreover, the value creation of entrepreneurship must be reciprocal. This means that an entrepreneurial endeavor should generate value both to the entrepreneur, as in “business” and also to the customers and the other surroundings, as in “social communities”. Another



prerequisite relates to the denotation of entrepreneurship being something unique and distinct. Although the resources used are ordinary, it is the way they are utilized and combined that makes an entrepreneurial endeavor extraordinary.

Similarly, Amabile refers to creativity as “the production of novel, appropriate ideas” and emphasizes the balance between these ideas having to be both new, to outstrip the current domain, yet not too bizarre, to secure a favorable endorsement of a change (Amabile 1997b, p. 40). Weinberger et al. further confirm the definition of creativity as the generation of novel ideas and add a requirement for these ideas to be useful (Weinberger et al. 2018: 3). According to Fillis and Rentschler, creativity can be described “as showing imagination and originality of thought in moving beyond everyday thinking” (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 51). This statement refers to the difference between the previous state and the renewed way of rendering a situation. Creativity diverges from the determinate occasion and provides an unusual alternative to meet the demands set by its surroundings. Further, creativity denotes bending the fixed terms and modifying them into a new and more advanced form (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 51). The significance of creativity in developing innovations and therefore securing substantial organizational success is evident as “creativity is the first step in innovation, which is the successful implementation of those novel, appropriate ideas” (Amabile 1997b: 40). Consequently, previous studies of entrepreneurship have affirmed the importance of creativity in the process of developing a business idea (Heinonen, Hytti & Stenholm 2011: 659). Indeed, entrepreneurship can be referred to as a part of innovation, which can accordingly be explained as “the successful implementation of creative ideas” either in the form of new business ventures or as an accretion to already existent business (Amabile 1997a: 18).

### **2.2.1 Entrepreneur as a creative individual**

According to Kirzner (2009), entrepreneurs can roughly be categorized in two different groups of “innovators” and “responders”. Innovators are characterized as individuals who employ a creative and innovative approach to generate new inventions which

operate as unparalleled paradigms. Responders, on the other hand, induce reactions to already existing alternatives and their additional value is based on the entrepreneur's ability to analyze movements within the market and detect opportunities for further entrepreneurial actions. (Kirzner 2009: 148 – 149.) Similar to the different stages of the entrepreneurial process, division of entrepreneurs to such roles as innovators and responders refers to the fact that various types of creativity and play may be invoked by different entrepreneur identity roles. Due to the diversity of the entrepreneurial process, various approaches to correspond to the requirements of certain entrepreneurial endeavors are required. Thus, it is relevant to increase the knowledge of entrepreneurial roles and the types of creativity and play these roles may invoke.

It has been stated that there are several similarities in the characteristics of both a creative and entrepreneurial person, such as being self-initiative and flexible (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 53). Mainemelis and Ronson argue that creativity is influenced by some rather permanent personal characteristics and moreover remark that an individual's potential for inducing creativity is complemented by cognitive and intelligence factors (2006: 101). Further, previous research has determined that the main characteristics of a creative individual are; "independence, the drive to achieve, curiosity, self-confidence, and deep immersion in a task" (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 53). In turn, the main characters of an individual with entrepreneurial orientation are; "self-confidence, perseverance, high energy levels, calculated risk taking and the need to achieve" (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 53). Also, it is relevant to remark that several characteristics of both a creative and entrepreneurial person refer to the intrinsic motivation to work on a task in a highly immersive flow of thoughts and the determination to achieve a personal goal. However, despite of the personal characteristics of potentially entrepreneurial and creative individuals, it has been noted that the most effective teams in terms of organizational outcomes consist of people with great diversity such as age, background and knowledge (Rieber 2001: 7). This statement assumes that the team is reinforced, advanced and complemented by each individual's expertise. Moreover, various perspectives encourage

divergent thinking process which is likely to lead to wider range of proposals than an individual alone could produce.

Wartiovaara, Lahti and Wincent (2018) have examined entrepreneurs more closely and discovered some characteristics and attitudes that might be somewhat universal for entrepreneurs. Wartiovaara et al. state that entrepreneurs are more prone to experience inspiration more often compared to for example managers. (2018: 2.) This may in turn result in entrepreneurs considering occasions as opportunities more frequently. Further it is stated that “inspiration influences individuals’ evaluations of opportunities” (Wartiovaara et al. 2018: 2). Indeed, inspiration and motivation have been considered as the antecedents to entrepreneurship (Wartiovaara et al. 2018: 1). Although, entrepreneurship and creativity overlap in many ways, they are yet distinguishable from each other. Regarding the characteristics of both a creative and entrepreneurial person, ambition, persistency and motivation seem to be the most connective factors. Whereas ambition and persistency refer to the state of will to solve a puzzle no one ever has been able to unravel, motivation signifies the personal attachment to disclose this particular dilemma.

Further, Heinonen et al. (2011) denote that while conducting a research among students, Gomez (2007) discovered that although every person is creative to some extent, there was a group of students which came to prominence as individuals with particular abilities to endure the ambiguity of unresolved problems. Instead of trying to avoid the enticement of abrupt determination and to resist a relatively quick interpretation of the situation, certain students showed patience, tolerance, and involvement towards solving the problem by considering various solutions. (Gomez 2007 quoted after Heinonen et al. 2011: 661-662.) This type of task dedication and perseverance indicates that the significance of intrinsic motivation in entrepreneurship and creativity is substantial. Intrinsic motivation relates to the individual’s opinion of the value of the work itself, such as personal interest, whereas extrinsic motivation is connected with the rewards accomplished through the work, such as monetary or status outcomes (Amabile 1997a: 20-21). Amabile (1997a) argues that entrepreneurial creativity needs “motivational synergy” in order

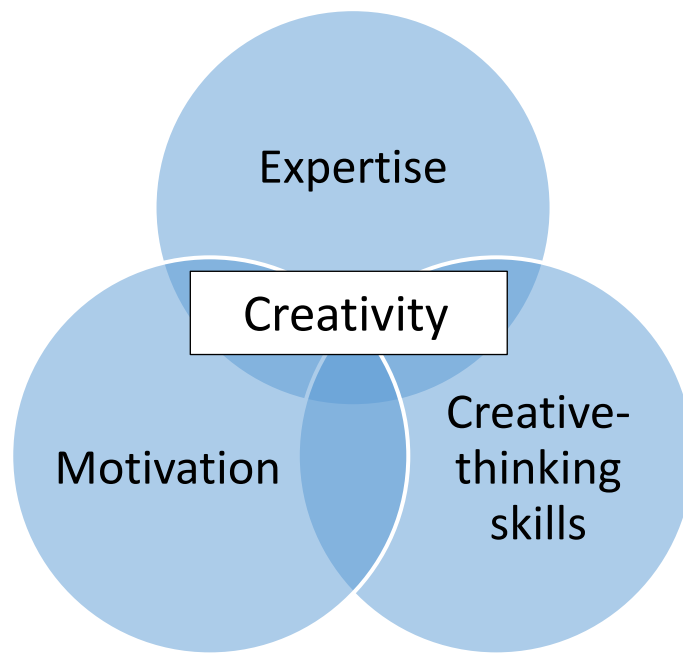
to flourish. Motivational synergy refers to the combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational elements. This synergy incorporates deep personal dedication and engagement but is simultaneously reinforced by external incentives which consolidates ambition, proficiency development, and long-term commitment. (Amabile 1997a: 18.) Further, creativity has a psychological link to entrepreneurial decision making in the forms of “personality, cognitive style and trait theory” (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 59). However, Heinonen et al. (2011) have stated that individual traits are not relevant in identifying prospective entrepreneurs. Moreover, they argue that creativity as a personal character is not sufficient enough to predict the ability of developing a successful of a business idea. (Heinonen et al. 2011: 668.)

### **2.2.2 The prerequisites of creativity**

Amabile (1998) defines three components of business creativity (Figure 2); creative-thinking skills, expertise, and motivation (Amabile 1998: 78). The componential theory proposes that people are likely to experience creativity when they feel most intrinsically motivated, when their skills are accompanied by their personal interests, and a person is passionate about as well as talented in what he or she does (Amabile 1997b: 42). Creative-thinking skills or imagination derives partly from a person’s personality and describes the process of viewing problems from different perspectives and combining solutions by utilizing several ideas (Amabile 1998: 79). Amabile (1997b) states that creative-thinking skills incorporate the capability of approaching a problem from various angles, it also comprises the ability and knowledge of applying diverse theories outside of their typical contexts. This type of divergent thinking process often results in novel explorations which can further be developed by immersed, motivated and persevering working style. (Amabile 1997b: 42.)

Expertise refers to the person’s background knowledge acquired in a certain field of industry which enables him or her to adjust, modify and elaborate this information contextually (Amabile 1998: 78-79). “The expertise component includes memory for factual

knowledge, technical proficiency, and special talents in the target work domain” (Amabile 1997b: 42). Amabile states that “expertise and creative thinking are an individual’s raw materials” (Amabile 1998: 79). This expression refers to the quality of creative-thinking skills and expertise as a background construction for creativity. Moreover, the ‘raw material’ can be related to something that the person has gained so far and which assigns a certain ability to know enough about the subject. Yet, this knowledge should not prevent having an open mind and the ability of generating new ideas with combining old and new components. What is even more relevant in the emergence of creativity is the motivation of a person to conduct a certain task by utilizing his or her best knowledge and skills. Amabile (1997b) emphasizes that although the expertise and creative thinking skills acquired by a person cover a great part of the capabilities of a person, these will not however help to interpret how much motivation and effort the person is willing to put in a task. Amabile (1997b) further explains that motivation can be divided to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to personal interests towards one’s work. A person may be motivated to work for example because of he or she truly finds the work itself interesting, meaningful and highly captivating. In turn, extrinsic motivation denotes being motivated by a goal apart from the actual work. Extrinsic motivation may consist for instance of monetary compensation, winning, rewards, or reaching a certain status. (Amabile 1997b: 44.) Therefore, motivation can be distinguished from the aforementioned two components of creativity. Motivation determines the actual action a person is willing to take in order to implement creativity generated by his or her creative-thinking skills and expertise. (Amabile 1998: 79.)



**Figure 3.** The three components of creativity (Amabile 1998: 78).

Previous research by Amabile (1997a) has indicated that intrinsic motivation has a significant linkage to increasing creativity. In contrary, extrinsic motivation may prejudice the overall performance of a work task, however, the technical quality seems to be immune to the changes of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and attain the same level of quality despite of the type of motivation. (Amabile 1997a: 21.) However, also extrinsic motivation may have a central part in enhancing creativity. According to Amabile's motivational synergy theory (1997a), extrinsic motivation may contribute to intrinsic motivation through two psychological mechanisms. The first one of which can be referred to as "extrinsics in service of intrinsics", means that some extrinsic motivational factors may encourage intrinsic motivation and creativity without diminishing the inevitable personal interest, these factors may be referred to as "synergistic extrinsic motivators". Second of all, Amabile (1997a) introduces "the creative process" and states that synergistic extrinsic motivators may contribute to the "stage-appropriate motivation" or "the motivation-work cycle match". (Amabile 1997a: 22.) According to Amabile (1997a) the creative process includes stages of "problem identification" in which the problem is being thoroughly identified until proceeding to the second stage of "preparation" in which relevant assets are acquired in order to turn the problem into an opportunity. The next step

is called “response generation” which refers to generating various alternatives and strategies which may lead to achieving the set goal. The fourth and final stage is “validation and communication” which comprises careful deliberation among the alternatives and eventually selecting a strategy and communication style accurate to tackle the issue. (Amabile 1997a: 22-23.)

### **2.2.3 Organizational impacts**

Entrepreneurship and creativity have become more and more crucial for organizations. Fillis and Rentschler (2010) state that increased globalization and competition have intensified the significance of creativity and its ability to reverse challenges into opportunities. Further, entrepreneurial creativity has reinforced its role as the best way of taking advantage of these subpoenas. (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 72-73.) Another reason why the relationship between entrepreneurship and creativity is so important lies within the fact that it has great implications on organizational outcomes. As Hjorth, Strati, Drakopoulou and Weik indicate, for organizations competing in today’s business environment “the biggest risk is to not create new value” (2018: 157). Since consumers have increasingly more power, organizations need to pay attention to their customers’ requirements and conquer other competitors by providing their audience with outstanding alternatives. Although the need for creativity has been pronounced in an organizational context, the same verity applies in entrepreneurship. In fact, as Amabile (1997a) claims, the definition of creativity as “novel and appropriate solutions to open-ended problems” applies widely in all human actions. Further, innovation denotes the successful accomplishment of these solutions. (Amabile 1997a: 18.) As a consequence, creativity is also the foundation for entrepreneurial emergence. By the same token, entrepreneurs need to outdo their contestants and provide new products and services to their customers. A new creation is not sufficient in case it is considered just as something novel but lacks the capacity of bringing value. In turn, a creative idea which has been successfully put into practice in an organizational context, can be described as an innovation (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 66).

In terms of entrepreneurship, Fillis and Rentschler point out that the innovation must have profitable outcomes both financially and socially (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 50). The essence of a new innovation must be first and foremost to bring additional value to the current state. In other words, entrepreneurship will not be actualized in case it does not bring value to its audience. Likewise, creativity does not fulfil the definition as something being considered creative unless it is valued by its target group. Whereas creativity can be described as something novel and distinct from the past, entrepreneurship may be considered as the embodiment of creativity. Similarly, creativity may be explained as fuel to entrepreneurship, something that evokes diverse thinking process and further induces original outcomes in forms of new innovations. Creativity is an essential part of entrepreneurship because it reflects the diversity and transformation that need to occur in order to generate new, innovative outcomes. In addition, creativity contains the change that entrepreneurship needs in order to come to fruition. Without creativity entrepreneurship is difficult, if not impossible, to induce because it lacks the distinction and uniqueness which distinguishes novelty from the presence. Moreover, entrepreneurship contains an aspect of practicality. In order to call an action entrepreneurial, there needs to be a part that will be conducted in practice, not just on a theory basis. Amabile explains that entrepreneurship requires innovations or implementation of entrepreneurial ideas in practical terms (1997a: 20). Hjorth affirms this statement and remarks that entrepreneurship is to “transform occasions into opportunities and opportunities into actualities (2005: 387). In contrast, creativity may remain on a theoretical level without the demand for action. An idea may be considered as creative and remain on a theory level without it being fulfilled in practice.

#### **2.2.4 The completion**

Since, both entrepreneurship and creativity contain the requirement of being something novel and different, it is relevant to consider to what extent this requirement unites the two factors. As discussed previously, the difference between entrepreneurship and



creativity may lie within the fact that entrepreneurship calls for viability and operations in reality. Creativity, on the other hand may remain on a theoretical level and abide as an idea. Yet, both of the factors utilize novelty as their primary source of inspiration. However, the definition of novelty is vague. As Fillis and Rentschler claim, being able to define creativity one must also be able to exclude the factors which do not dovetail with the denotation of creativity (2010: 65). Novelty does not necessarily refer to something brand new and entirely distinct from the prevailing state of affairs. Novelty may also appear in the form of a follow-up, an updated version or a refreshed approach. Although entrepreneurial endeavors usually fall into the category of updated rejoinders, at times creativity provokes changes in the prevailing pattern and generates outcomes which then adapt a role of a precursor for subsequent innovations. (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 66.) Despite the demand for paradigm changes, creative solutions may be realized already when applying the doctrine of one context to another. In a sense, utilizing former knowledge and employing this in a different environment is the premise of innovations for the most part. The level of novelty then depends on the choices of either continuing with the same path as the previous knowledge and building on top of the bedrock, or diverging from the consolidated conception and revolutionizing the position of acknowledged foundation.

Also, Amabile (1997a) acknowledges the possibility of generating novelty in already existing organizations and, on the other hand, states that novelty in every business endeavor should not be taken for granted. Unless there is a substantial amount of novelty, creativity and change in the approach to business insights, the requirements of entrepreneurial creativity are not met. Amabile (1997a) further states that entrepreneurial creativity may however occur in another context although utilizing the same paradigm, for example in a different location or in the set of new business operations. Nevertheless, the requirement of the practical aspect in any entrepreneurial activity remains and the implementation of new business must occur in practice. According to Amabile (1997a), entrepreneurial creativity may be defined as discovering and executing new business ideas which bring additional value to the existing paradigms in the form of new products

and services. Further, the appropriateness and usefulness of the ideas may take place in “(a) the products or services themselves, (b) identifying a market for the products or services, (c) ways of producing or delivering the products or services, or (d) ways of obtaining resources to produce or deliver the products or services”. (Amabile 1997a: 20.)

It can be claimed that entrepreneurship is generating something novel by utilizing creative approaches which then lead to successful innovations. Some of the greatest innovations have been created by entrepreneurs and with their outstanding ability of “thinking outside the box” (Kirzner 2009: 149). Approaching conflicts from a different angle or seeing problems in a different light may describe entrepreneurs in their creative work. Creative thinking means considering multiple perspectives of an existing problem or challenge and coming up with a new solution to a dilemma. In a way creativity is problem-solving, although it is not restricted merely to that. Fillis and Rentschler explain that “creativity is also viewed as a central element in problem solving and there are a number of ways in which creative thinking can facilitate decision making” (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 52). Previous research on creative entrepreneurship has found out that creativity requires knowledge, cognitive thinking process, and combining opposing elements or creating novel forms of old and new components (Ward 2004: 176). In terms of products, a successful product follows the pattern of combining something familiar, in order to gain consumers’ trust by taking advantage of the reliability of an existing feature, and something new to add leverage and usefulness to a product in order to attract more customers (Ward 2004: 173). This argument reflects the symbiosis between entrepreneurship and creativity. The fact that an entrepreneurial innovation must always correspond to the demand by the audience refers to the significance of creativity as the mediator of desirable change. Even though the change would be minor, there needs to be a clear impact on improving the customer’s experience. However, the relation of having background knowledge and using it in a creative way, may be paradoxical (Ward 2004: 185-186). Previous knowledge may for example restrict the creative ‘flow’ of ideas if the background information is dominating the creation process in which several and diverse solutions should be elaborated. This risk of restriction may be facilitated or even

completely avoided by harnessing play as the method of discovering new innovations. The study discusses the relationship between entrepreneurship and play in the following chapter.

### **2.2.5 Challenges**

Despite their great potentiality to produce innovations and to increase monetary profits, the challenge of both entrepreneurship and creativity is affiliated with the fact that both are difficult to manage. Previous research has indicated that both entrepreneurship and creativity may be challenging to produce and control. Another fact hampering the manageability of entrepreneurship and creativity is the ambiguity both of these factors incorporate. Previous research has discovered that entrepreneurship “embraces randomness, uncertainty and ambiguity” (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 49). Although entrepreneurship is the result of a long-term and deliberated process, yet it contains a share of coincidence. In addition, due to the obscurity of creativity, various efforts have led to the failure of defining creativity by measurable attributes or predicting it with a reliable model (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 52). Although entrepreneurship and creativity may be stimulated by providing the necessary requirements for these two factors to flourish, it is yet ambiguous to draw an accurate formula to generate such deviant and even arbitrary line of thought. Entrepreneurial action and creative thinking can be encouraged, yet, it is not given that this will lead to any expected outcomes. That is to say, both entrepreneurship and creativity are difficult to force. Moreover, ideas develop both gradually as sequential versions of existing prototypes as well as radically diverging from the prevailing paradigms (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 59). Therefore, entrepreneurship and creativity can consist of both logic and randomness.

Regardless of the challenges posed by the ambiguity of entrepreneurship and creativity, the relationship between these two concepts is auspicious. In fact, creativity has been proven to facilitate the vagueness and complexity of decision making in entrepreneurial processes (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 56). More precisely Fillis and Rentschler (2010)

explain that creativity has a central role in reconciling entrepreneurial ideas with the demands of the external surroundings. Creativity is often achieved through combining existing knowledge and resources unconventionally and freely, in new kind of ways. Also, this unique approach to existing knowledge amplifies the role of creativity as a vital part in problem-solving. Although creativity follows both logical and gradual thinking processes, the full capacity of creativity is often utilized when it is steered by “flexible, exploratory, non-predetermined paths”. (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 70.) That being said, it is relevant to consider how to encourage creativity to embark these paths in the next chapter concerning creativity and play.

## **2.3 Creativity – play**

Continuing with the conclusion of the previous chapter, the thesis now discusses the dual relationships between creativity and play. It has been stated that “play helps to stimulate the cognitive, affective and motivational aspects of the creative process” (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 64). When aiming to generate creative ideas, play may have an essential role in expanding the thinking process and allowing diverse proposals to emerge. In order to take a closer look into the role of play as a moderator for creativity, the thesis analyses next the second relationship of the triangle. This section begins by considering the definition of playfulness and continues with analyzing what play means in adulthood. Further, the thesis addresses the role of play in opportunity search strategies and reviews the effects of the relationship between creativity and play also later on in the creativity process.

### **2.3.1 Playfulness**

Playfulness can be defined as “the predisposition to engage in an activity as play” (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 113). On the other hand, probably the most original way to understand play is to explain it as “a cognitive or educative” action (Rieber 2001: 5).

Whereas this definition still holds the truth, Rieber has indicated additional perspectives to play such as “play as progress”, “play as power”, and “play as self” (2001: 5). “Play as progress” describes the responsibility of play as an educative influence which is mostly associated with children’s development process. Although, playfulness in adulthood has received considerably less attention than playfulness among children (Proyer 2011: 463), previous research has indicated the importance of playfulness also among adults (Proyer 2017: 113). Therefore, the progressive aspect of play may also relate to adult development and especially to creativity and eventually to entrepreneurial processes, since these are often gradually developing actions which require both deliberate as well as subconscious thinking. With “play as power” Rieber refers to the competitive side of play whereas “play as self” indicates the experiential aspect of play itself (2001: 5). Also, the power and experience perspectives of play may be converted to creativity and moreover to entrepreneurship. In business overall, many operations appear ultimately as competition. Entrepreneurship is no exception in this matter. First and foremost, entrepreneurship is about competing against other business providers in the market by exploiting originality other competitors do not possess. Moreover, the experiential aspect of play may relate to harnessing one’s previous experiences in generating new forms of play. Consequently, play is also linked to creativity since play incorporates the propensity for embracing various distinctive configurations produced by a creative imagination. However, there has been doubts about the benefits of play and opinions for and against the actual utility of play have been proposed. Traditionally play has been identified as an antecedent to “learning, socialization, and developmental adaptation” although later researchers have started to moderate direct benefits of play and rather emphasize play as an indirect promoter of development (Rieber 2001: 5). Because of the ambiguous benefits of playfulness, the thesis aims to increase knowledge of play as an antecedent to adult development. More specifically, the current study draws attention not only to playfulness among adults, but analyzes the significance of play in encouraging entrepreneurial emergence. Regardless of the remarkable amount of research conducted within play, there is a lack of evidence indicating the motivational, behavioral and educational effects of play (Rieber 2001: 5).

Proyer (2014) has examined more precisely the perceived functions of playfulness. Previous research has discovered that playfulness is most often associated with humor and laughter, creativity, relationships, well-being, coping-situation, mastery orientation, and coping-self. (Proyer 2014: 244.) Moreover, Proyer's study states that "people's perceptions of playfulness can be grouped into seven broader categories; namely, well-being, humor and laughter, mastery orientation, creativity, (cultivating) relationships, and coping (either for the person him-/herself or coping with adverse situations)" (2014: 249). Whereas the perceptions of play extend widely to the everyday human actions, playfulness in organizational and moreover in entrepreneurial contexts has not been fully acknowledged.

### **2.3.2 A playful adult**

When identifying what play actually means in the adulthood and how it is related to business opportunities, it is relevant to consider the features of a playful individual. Some requirements selected by Proyer are "that playfulness (a) can be observed by the person him-/herself and (b) by other people; (c) that playful adults frequently exhibit playful behavior; (d) can easily change from a non-playful (or serious) frame of mind to a playful one; and (e) know situations in which they were fully absorbed by a playful activity" (2012: 989). These notions of play suggest that, in contrast to entrepreneurship and creativity, playfulness is more concrete and may be controlled by the surroundings as well as the person itself. The fact that play is noticeable and manageable enables play to be more easily encouraged by providing the necessary prerequisites. Further, play is likely to serve as an effective accelerator for increasing creativity because it can be generated practically. The current study will first identify some of the required personal characteristics for a playful individual, and later continue with considering the environmental prerequisites for play.

Proyer (2017) has elaborated on a renewed model of playfulness with four main points. The first one is “other-directed” which describes one’s willingness to utilize play in interacting, building relationships and releasing tension with other people. The second one is referred to as “lighthearted” and can be explained as a person’s perspective of viewing the world in a less-serious way and as the orientation towards improvising and playing in a daily manner. The third point is “intellectual” and relates to the person’s interest in pondering on various problems and solutions. The fourth and last point of Proyer’s new structural model of playfulness is “whimsical” relating to a person’s inclination towards unusual and curious situations as well as ordinary occasions which he or she can easily turn into personally fascinating experiences. (Proyer 2017: 114.) Moreover, Proyer and Ruch (2011) have indicated that playfulness is linked with curiosity, openness towards new things and the eagerness of learning. These behaviors together with some typical characteristics associated with a playful adult – such as spontaneity, activity, creativity and the willingness to take certain risks – may facilitate divergent thinking process and further nourish curiosity to expand the scope of interest. (Proyer & Ruch 2011: 3.) In their research, Proyer and Ruch discovered that creativity and humor were the strongest correlations with playfulness (Proyer & Ruch 2011: 7). Also, when regarding global predictors for playfulness, certain styles of humor were proved to be the best ones to precede playful action, whereas some other types of humor did not correlate with play at all. As a conclusion to the role of humor in playfulness, Proyer and Ruch state that humor is “a variant of play” and although humor and playfulness may be juxtaposed to some extent, they are yet two separate concepts. (Proyer & Ruch 2011: 9.)

Proyer and Ruch (2011) have clarified some personal characteristics that relate to adult playfulness. According to their study, intellectuality and emotional strengths were linked to playfulness most distinctly. Contrarily, high restraint was the least correlated with adult playfulness. (Proyer & Ruch 2011: 8.) Further, Proyer and Ruch argue that high self-regulation and modesty may prevent free idealization as well as sharing comprehensive knowledge and therefore inhibit spontaneous and playful behavior (Proyer & Ruch 2011: 10). Nevertheless, the authors declare that playfulness should not be considered merely

as a children's development phase but as a progressive indicator for the intellectual behavior of adults (Proyer & Ruch 2011: 11). The intellectual behavior can be further linked to a personality trait of an adult. Proyer states that playfulness can be defined as a person's ability to interpret daily occasions and moreover to convert those situations into forms that may either entertain, interest, or provide intellectual stimulations. (Proyer 2017: 114.) Indeed, playfulness as a personality trait indicates also the influence of a person's creativity in interpreting and formulating daily occasions into more personally interesting forms. Playfulness is associated with intellectuality, humor, and emotional strength which encourage creativity in terms of increasing stimulations to divergent thinking and being confident as well as original with one's idealization. Also, whereas other features of playfulness such as curiosity, spontaneity, and eagerness to learning foster creativity, intellectuality evens out the propensity to risk taking and construct an opportune basis for entrepreneurship.

Moreover, another fact linking playfulness and an entrepreneur to each other is the ability of a playful individual utilizing playful actions diversely in daily occasions. According to Proyer (2017) playful individuals are able to exercise play for example in interaction with others, as a coping method, and in problem solving, both in informal such as free time as well as in formal contexts such as at work. In addition, playful individuals are acknowledged as individuals who prefer complexity over simplicity and do not mind dealing with perplexing subjects, actions or individuals. (Proyer 2017: 114.) Also, Branett acknowledges the ability of playful individuals to "transform virtually any environment to make it more stimulating, enjoyable and entertaining" although these results have been proven more distinctly among children than adults (Barnett 2007: 949). Some of the most important factors enabling individuals to reframe their surroundings into a more entertaining and pleasant form are the characteristics such as non-seriousness, cheerfulness, positivity, and openness which are all assigned to playful adults (Proyer 2012: 992). As some of these characteristics fall in the same category with humor it is needed to remark that humor relates to creativity because it entails a person to be more tolerant towards ambiguity and therefore capable of playing with diverse scenarios.



Moreover, cheerfulness assists in remaining extraverted as well as with keeping up with a good and positive spirit which in turn contributes to managing the ambiguity of trifling with diverse situations. In fact, in addition to preferring complex situations, Proyer has discovered that playful adults are relatively resistant to long-term plans, overall conscientiousness and setting specific goals. (Proyer 2012: 992.)

### **2.3.3 Opportunity search strategies**

Although creativity is an essential part of entrepreneurship it has been proven that it alone is not enough in producing business ideas, in turn “it has to be accompanied by opportunity search activities in order to generate viable business ideas” (Heinonen et al. 2011: 659). According to Heinonen et al. (2011), entrepreneurship research states that albeit creativity and innovation - which can be referred to as “the art” - are important parts of entrepreneurship, there is also the need for “business competence and knowledge” the so called “science” aspect of entrepreneurship. It can be further explained that whereas the art refers to the idealization of new business ideas, the science relates to the practical side of entrepreneurship, such as allocating resources and controlling other business operations in the most profitable way. (Heinonen et al. 2011: 660.) Therefore, creativity alone does not guarantee a successful business idea implementation. However, although creativity does not directly affect the success of a business idea, creativity is strongly related to “opportunity search strategies” (Heinonen et al. 2011: 668). According to Heinonen et al. (2011), “creative behaviour and knowledge acquisition” can be considered as the utmost extents of opportunity search strategies. Moreover, the business ideas are likely to benefit from the opportunity search strategies since they “are creative and based on knowledge acquisition” and these may further enhance the likeability of considering those ideas as successful. (Heinonen et al. 2011: 668.)

Heinonen et al. have collected diverse opportunity search strategies based on previous literature; “proactive searching, competitive scanning, knowledge acquisition, innovative behaviour and collective action” (2011: 662). *Knowledge acquisition* refers to

acquiring and analyzing information from various resources utilizing for example customer experiences, products and service, big data, financial reports as well as researches and publications (Puhakka 2007: 22). More specifically, this deliberately obtained new information needs to be compared and modulated within the previous knowledge and further harnessed as a benefit for the business (Heinonen et al. 2011: 663). Despite of the organized knowledge acquisition, Puhakka argues that discovering new business ideas does not follow merely a gradual thinking process because it also constitutes of previous experience, interpretation of new knowledge and approaching new opportunities with intuition (2007: 24). *Competitive scanning*, on the other hand focuses on carefully exploring the surroundings, the other competitors and the customers, in order to find those business gaps that will bring additional customer value and therefore entrepreneurial success as well as leverage in the competition against other companies – when advanced on with the appropriate strategy. Compiling an intelligent strategy is the key in supporting fair competition and securing the development of new innovations within the industry. “Competitive aggressiveness” (versus “aggressive competition”) allows entrepreneurs to find a margin for them to execute a unique business strategy instead of fighting against all the other players in the same market. Therefore, Puhakka (2007) presents competitive aggressiveness as a great way to enhance healthy competition and to generate products, services and innovations which are in demand of the consumers. (Puhakka 2007: 24.)

*Innovative behavior* can be affiliated with competitive scanning in a sense that it is about creating new innovations in order to change the established domains within the industry (Puhakka 2007: 26). Therefore, instead of competing against other alike business providers, it may be more beneficial to explore areas which have not yet been discovered but have the capacity to bring eligible additional value to the existing range of opportunities. *Proactive searching* is essential in this type of innovative behavior. Moreover, proactive searching cherishes visioning by directing its focus on the future and aiming to recognize certain changes and trends in the market (Puhakka 2007: 25). Through careful analysis of the business environment, entrepreneurs may be able to detect nascent opportunities

and establish a ground for business operations before other competitors realize the potential of the market. Puhakka (2007) states that although business opportunity discovery contains a great deal of systematic knowledge acquisition, the interpretation of this data is accompanied by intuition and the dynamics of the various stakeholders. Consequently, searching for new business opportunities is also “based on incomplete information” and incorporates a chance of uncertainty. According to Puhakka, proactive searching is related to reflecting acquired knowledge and business proposals on other people in order to further analyze the incomplete information and clarify visioning of the future. (Puhakka 2007: 25.) Also, *collective action* describes the social activity entrepreneurs utilize in their networks. This strategy emphasizes the likability that an idea will be more thoroughly analyzed when reviewed from several persons’ perspectives (Puhakka 2007: 27).

Whereas opportunity search strategies may be bundled up together with each other in the process of developing viable business ideas, the fact combining all of the strategies is the aspect of newness. Puhakka (2007) suggests that newness occurs in the process of collecting knowledge from various resources, analyzing and interpreting it with a wide range of perspectives, visualizing future movements, identifying a gap and drawing a clever business idea in order to fulfill the requirements of this margin. More specifically Puhakka (2007) explains that knowledge acquisition is not enough to create newness because it provides information of the current situation but does not offer an outlook for the future. Therefore, it is vital for the business opportunity process to be proactive. Moreover, “entrepreneurs should somehow ‘see the future’”. (Puhakka 2007: 45-46.) Despite of the complexity of the relationship between creativity and viable business ideas, creativity has a significant role in opportunity search strategies. When taking an individualistic approach to the utilization of these strategies it has been discovered that creative people have the ability of applying diverse behaviors, as well as producing novel ideas and proposals in the process of generating new business ideas. What is particularly interesting in the study of Heinonen et al. (2011) is the fact that creativity has connections not only to idealization but also to analyzing and moreover acquiring knowledge

and business competence. This type of knowledge acquisition denotes the science aspect of entrepreneurship which is required in order to generate viable business ideas. Although entrepreneurs might mostly be praised for their innovativeness and ability to discover extraordinary ideas, the capacity to acquire and utilize new knowledge should be considered as important and vital for successful business ideas. Moreover, Heinonen et al. have discovered that opportunity search strategies have a significant impact not only on the development of successful business ideas in the discovery phase but also later on the evolution and growth of the new venture. (Heinonen et al. 2011: 668.)

When considering play as a significant factor in bringing up entrepreneurial ideas, solving problems related to the evolvement of new innovations and eventually proving them as feasible entrepreneurial ventures, it is inevitable to pay attention to the contribution of creativity in play. Nisula, Kallio, Oikarinen and Kianto state that “playfulness is essentially embedded in creativity” (2015: 84). Play encourages creativity by enabling both positive as well as negative experiences and expressions to channel the outcomes of this unification in a safe environment (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 97). As discussed previously, play offers a secure state in which diverse ideas may be discovered, explored, and further refined. Moreover, play carves out space for creativity to flourish. Entrepreneurs are able to resolve complex problems in the safe and positive surroundings of play where there is plenty of room for imagination. Play might have even negative outcomes, so to speak, and yet ultimately these have positive effects on the entrepreneurial action. Considering various alternatives through play, including the worst-case scenarios, improves the security system of entrepreneurial ventures. Extensive risk analysis, although conducted through playful action helps to consider more accurately the level of control and protection an entrepreneurial venture requires in order to be successful. The current study argues that since one of the most important aspects of a successful entrepreneur is the ability to use one’s creativity diversely and moreover frequently, not just every now and then (Weinberger et al. 2018: 2), play may have an essential role in enhancing this daily creativity.

Although there is still a great amount of ambiguity in clarifying how the “interactive, episodic and complex” opportunity discovery process works in practice (Puhakka 2007: 21), it has been justified that creativity alone is not enough in generating successful business ideas. However, it has been indicated that investing cerebration in the opportunity discovery stage of the entrepreneurial process is likely to lead to profitable outcomes in terms of the performance of the new venture. (Puhakka 2007: 46). And yet, creativity has an essential part in utilizing various opportunity search strategies. Moreover, it is stated that whereas creativity has an effect on the success of a business idea through both creative as well as knowledge acquisition strategies, the influence proceeds “more effectively via creative search strategies” (Heinonen et al. 2011: 669). Further, this study suggests that play is an effective tool for reviewing opportunity search strategies. Indeed, play has the ability to utilize various resources as the inspiration for disclosing playful actions. Play revolves around experiencing and exploring new and diverse chances by intuition which is likely to lead to creative outcomes. Making room for these kinds of gaps is essential in entrepreneurship. These gaps can be further interpreted and developed to proceed as new innovations. Due to its chance of uncertainty, play offers an effective insight for visioning the future. Also, despite of the generalization of entrepreneurship usually being associated with the independency of the entrepreneur, collective action and peer feedback are essential factors in implementing successful business ideas. Due to the ease of play, it may facilitate communicating and engaging with the network around the entrepreneurial operation.

#### **2.3.4 Creativity and play expanding boundaries**

Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) state that the most crucial aspect of creativity is novelty. In the first instance, novel ideas require “divergent thinking and mental transformations” (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 93). These two cognitive processes refer to the production of new knowledge by, first of all, reviewing acquired information through various lenses and pushing boundaries within the assigned margins when speaking in terms of divergent thinking. Second of all, when referring to mental transformations, Mainemelis and

Ronson emphasize the utilization of existing knowledge but applying it in a new unprecedented context. Moreover, the authors describe play as “the threshold between reality and unreality” which liberates creativity and imagination to give rise to unique and unprecedented ideas, prospects and eventualities. (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 94.) More precisely, “Play facilitates five creativity-relevant cognitive processes: problem framing, divergent thinking, mental transformations, practice with alternative solutions, and evaluative ability” (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 93). In addition to divergent thinking and mental transformations which are explained before, problem framing emphasizes the importance of approaching and enclosing a problem in an unfamiliar way. According to Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) unique problem framing is essential because it has a direct connection to the problem-solving process. In order for the solution to be remarkable, the positioning of the problem must be unusual as well. In addition, practice with alternative solutions refers to the opportunity of embracing different roles and considering various responses to the proposed question. Play provides bridges to various imaginable worlds and releases looseness to the flow of conclusions thus stimulating the evaluative ability. (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 94-95.)

When taking an organizational perspective to the relationship between creativity and play, it can be stated that given the rapid changes within the market, this connection has become more and more meaningful. Puhakka denotes that for a company the best way to manage the progressive transform and competition, is to practice one’s capability of quickly adjusting to new situations and take advantage of the opportunities arising in those changes (2007: 20). In order to manage the ongoing change and rapid fluctuations play may offer the required flexibility and buoyancy to respond to the challenges and fast-changing demands of the ambience. In turn, when observing play from an individualistic point of view, Nisula et al. (2015) suggest that play urges one to take a more spontaneous and creative approach and that this will often result in as outstanding outcomes and exceeding a person’s inherent potentiality. More specifically, play has this effect because of the profound utilization of all sources of knowledge “including intuitive and

embodied knowledge” in a way which ranges close to improvisation. (Nisula et al. 2015: 83.)

Nisula et al. (2015) have considered play more carefully as an actor enabling individuals with diverse backgrounds to merge their experiences and eventually to create something extraordinary, yet common. According to the authors, play indeed is “a forum of learning” as it can be identified as a form of communication to find an effective way to exchange thoughts, diverse-thinking to solve any dilemmas, interaction where individuals can learn from each other, and development which will help to improve one’s personal abilities. Nisula et al. (2015) also distinguish two different aspects of play. Whereas the first aspect of play as a “deviation from the real world” refers to play as a factor organizing space for creativity to flourish, the second aspect of play “as a distancing element” describes the effect of play on emerging diverse ideas, arguing about mutual understanding and finally reflecting this experience on collective learning. (Nisula et al. 2015: 83.) Although entrepreneurship may be often associated with individualism, entrepreneurs are nonetheless interacting with other stakeholders such as employees, customers, suppliers, retailers, investors and so on. In addition to the every-day creativity required from successful entrepreneurs, supposedly the most important outcome of the relationship between creativity and play is the likelihood of this symbiosis leading to innovations. After all, the composition of innovation is “passion, creativity, emotions, experiences, sense making, and social interaction” (Nisula et al. 2015: 80). Given the basics of both creativity and play, it is inevitable that many of those elements noted as important for innovation, can be identified as the likely returns of creativity and play.

### **2.3.5 Play accelerating creativity**

Previous research on creative entrepreneurship has found out that creativity requires knowledge, cognitive thinking process, and combining opposite elements or creating novel forms of old and new components (Ward 2004: 176). In terms of products, a successful product follows the pattern of combining something familiar, in order to gain

consumers' trust by taking advantage of the reliability of an existing feature, and something new to add leverage and usefulness to a product in order to attract more customers (Ward 2004: 173). However, the relation of having background knowledge and using it in a creative way, may be paradoxical (Ward 2004: 185-186). Previous knowledge may for example restrict the creative 'flow' of ideas if the background information is dominating the creation process where several and diverse solutions should be elaborated. Although there is a debate between commentators some of them claiming that it is possible to teach creativity, whereas others argue that it cannot be generated but only facilitated (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 52), the character of creativity as challenging to manage is evident. The risk of being restricted by previous knowledge can however be decreased by play. Unlike creativity, play does not require previous knowledge. In contrast, play resembles improvising, in which the lacking information is being substituted with various suggestions of what could be the right response to a challenging question. When improving creativity, play should be considered as a mediator for generating the atmosphere propitious for diverse idealization.

Besides of creating the stimulating premises for creative thinking, play affects the creativity process also by amplifying "intrinsic motivation, domain-relevant skills, and creativity skills" which are essential features of creativity (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 99). Play increases intrinsic motivation through effective skill development which in turn increases a person's commitment to a certain action. As presented before, according to Amabile (1997b) intrinsic motivation reflects a person's motivation in an action because of personal interest, excitement, satisfaction, or summons. Amabile further states that "Intrinsic Motivation Principle of Creativity applies not only to scientific creativity, but to business creativity as well" (Amabile 1997b: 39). Moreover, the Intrinsic Motivation Principle of Creativity acknowledges that a person's level of interest towards an activity correlates with the level of creativity used in the task and hence the motivation builds on the "perception of reward" and not on the reward itself (Amabile 1997b: 41).



When reviewing research literature on the relationship of play and creativity from the organizational perspective, the phenomenon of play fostering creativity may be distinguished in two ways; “play as engagement” and “play as diversion” (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 85). Although this division has been established in the organizational setting, this study employs it also in the entrepreneurial context. “Play as engagement” refers to the perspective of play committing a person to his or her work. “Play as diversion”, on the other hand, refers to the aspect of play offering a getaway from one’s work. The engagement perspective has been proven to influence the cognitive and affectivity aspects of creativity and to improve motivation and skills. (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 85.) The diversion aspect of play offers also an important recourse for entrepreneurs to preserve the originality and buoyancy in creativity process. In order to generate innovative business opportunities, space and a certain degree of detachment from the prevailing paradigms is required. Play provides a distraction from these restrictions and allows the mind to operate in a more creative way. In fact, psychoanalysts present that creativity emerges “from the unconscious or preconscious” whereas humanists suggest that it arises from “self-actualization” (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 60). The study considers both of these propositions as relevant derivation for creativity. Play particularly supports creative emergence through both means, by allowing the mind to act subconsciously and to express one’s inner self.

### **2.3.6 The benefits of play**

Heimann and Roepstorff remark that previous research has introduced three main proposals to explain the meaning of play; playfulness as activities, playfulness as a character trait, and playfulness as a frame of mind (Heimann & Roepstorff 2018: 2). Despite the fact that playfulness is acknowledged as an essential development phase in childhood, the characteristic aspect of playfulness in adulthood has been neglected (Proyer 2014: 242). However, in personality studies adult playfulness is recognized as a significant matter (Proyer 2012: 989). Typically, during childhood play is related to innovative behavior and learning to utilize different strategies fluently, whereas later on in adulthood

acquiring new skills becomes less common and a simpler learning strategy such as “observational learning” becomes more general (Pellegrini, Dupuis, & Smith 2007: 272). However, Pellegrini et al. (2007) argue that learning through observation or adult tuition transfers mostly already prevailing doctrines and patterns with less or no emphasis on the notion of novelty. Therefore, in order to generate something novel, in terms of adult playfulness, collectivity plays a major part in bringing up creativity and innovation. (Pellegrini et al. 2007: 267.)

The reason why an abundant amount of strategies is acquired during childhood derives from the fact that play allows these to emerge in a relatively low effort (Pellegrini et al. 2007: 261). More specifically, this is possible because of the safe and stimulating environment provided by play. Previous research on development has identified the influence of play. Although the relatively low risk of testing diverse opportunities through play has been identified mostly in developmental processes, this study suggests that the benefits of play may apply also in entrepreneurial emergence. Pellegrini et al. acknowledge “innovative behavior as an immediate benefit of play” (Pellegrini et al. 2007: 268). Moreover, the authors state that play is not just learning through absorbing existing paradigms but actually reshaping the environment through experiencing diverse routines and preparing to rapid changes with familiarizing oneself with various strategies. Experiencing and learning to adjust to inconsistent events can eventually benefit an individual to react quickly in real life situations. (Pellegrini et al. 2007: 269.)

### **2.3.7 Forms of play**

Nisula et al. (2015) have researched playfulness in organizations. They explain that play can mean anything such as “improvisational theatre, sketching with pictures, and serious play.” Improvisational theatre-based training for example “is a fruitful facilitator of playfulness, communication, and interaction between people involved, by offering tools for common joy, pleasure, openness, experiencing, questioning and learning”. During their research, Nisula et al. (2015) discovered that play had long-term organizational impacts

although all the involvement of the participants varied from eagerness to neglect. Indeed, the influence of improvisation and idealization although not received as practical and useful immediately, were proven to have a positive effect on organizational development. Sketching on the other hand may help in imagining an abstract situation more concretely. By offering a more tangible approach, sketching may encourage creativity and increase motivation to implement a task because the results of one's effort are more visible. In terms of serious play, Nisula et al. (2015) discovered that it may liberate participants from any restrictions and allow them to expand on their idealization beyond the actual context that they were physically at. (Nisula et al. 2015: 88 – 89.) Rieber (2001) defines serious play as play with purpose. Although play is typically associated with fun and not with seriousness, Rieber emphasizes the role of play as an effect of deliberate development and learning. (Rieber 2001: 4.) Nisula et al. (2015) propose that play promotes expansional thinking processes because a liberating environment is created through utilizing improvisation and metaphors that stimulates participants to cross borders in their imagination. Moreover, to serious play, it has been stated that whereas play is defined as unproductive action, serious play is an action expected to have an actual effect on reality. (Nisula et al. 2015: 91.)

Despite of some similarities, play is distinguished from games. Pellegrini et al. (2007) explain this differentiation by stating that whereas games are based on certain rules which all of the participants must agree to follow – or if not, they will be punished for breaking the rules – in play this type of commitment on regulation and fear of getting penalty is not present. Moreover, perhaps the most evident difference between a game and play is the point that games do not encourage creativity and innovation in the same proportion as play. (Pellegrini et al. 2007: 264.) Since play does not have predefined rules, this allows the participants to utilize their imagination and expand their thinking process more freely than when participating in games. However, in addition to the unspecified and libertarian aspects of play, previous knowledge and personal skills play a part in playfulness. Styhre (2008) rationalizes the discovery process of new innovations by referring to Caillois' theory of *agôn* and *alea*. Styhre declares that whereas *agôn* refers to the

cognitive skills acquired and present in the activity, alea relates to the surprising aspect of play. More precisely, Caillois' theory proposes that alea incorporates both internal and external variables which however cannot fully be managed and therefore unexpected situations deriving from this verity need to be exploited. As a conclusion, alea can be determined as "the influence of chance in certain forms of playing". (Styhre 2008: 144.) Given these aspects of play, it is important to remark that despite of playfulness being more manageable than creativity, it still incorporates a chance of uncertainty and cannot fully be controlled. Play requires stimulation for imagination in order to disengage from the bindings of reality. Likewise, to Styhre's proposal this thesis suggests that personal skills have an important role in the discovery process. This is because the participant in play must be able to position oneself outside of the restrictions of his or her surroundings, and have the courage to freely explore one's contemplation.

Play may also appear as a recovery method to boost creativity. Weinberger et al. (2018) have examined the recovery process of entrepreneurs and its impact on creativity. In contrast to previous literature on the subject, Weinberger et al. argue that instead of creativity being defined as "a stable personality trait that one is born with and does not change much over one's lifetime" creativity is more like an ability that can be improved. Although in their research Weinberger et al. (2018) examined primarily the effects of nighttime sleep and work-related problem-solving pondering after work, this study further entrusts that play may have a substantial role in alleviating the recovery phase of an entrepreneur and therefore increase the level of experienced creativity. More specifically, the study of Weinberger et al. (2018) suggest that the recovery process has a significant impact on the creativity of entrepreneurs and moreover that entrepreneurs are able to regulate their creative readiness through investing on their personal recovery. The authors argue that "the physiological and mental recovery of entrepreneurs after work enhances their creativity on the following day by stimulating the cognitive processes of creative problem solving". Further, a good nighttime sleep and an effective work-related problem-solving pondering have major roles in promoting the recovery process of entrepreneurs. Another interesting founding, in addition to the positive

effects of sleep and work-related problem-solving pondering, was that within age the creativity of entrepreneurs seems to decline due to lower engagement in work-related thinking outside of work. Therefore, the recovery process of entrepreneurs induces the fact that other days may be more creative than others. (Weinberger et al. 2018: 1 – 2.)

Whereas sleep intensifies the recovery process by supporting physiological and mental recovery during rest, work-related pondering promotes recovery through active thinking. In fact, Weinberger et al. (2018) state that the more an entrepreneur feels attracted to unresolved challenges, the faster it is possible for him or her to return to the thinking process with new acquired information. Consequently, the longer finding a solution to the problem takes, the more possible solutions are likely to emerge. Weinberger et al. conclude that although not every solution will be relevant in a particular problem-solving situation, the surplus of an intense work-related pondering may become useful later on in the entrepreneurial process. (Weinberger et al. 2018: 6.) Quite similar to sleep, the current study suggests that play may offer valuable rest from consistent thinking, in a sense a break for the brain to release itself from the circle of repetitive thoughts. Moreover, play is likely to boost the problem-solving process by offering essential space for entrepreneurs to step outside of the prevailing framework. This space can be described as a state in which the brain is not constantly processing information and trying to solve a problem. Instead, in play the brain is subconsciously processing the information required in the creative emergence. In the free context of play several alternatives and solutions are likely to arise. Similar to work-related problem-solving pondering, play may produce redundant alternatives which should however not be considered as waste, but as resource for further development and readiness. As both development and being ready to adjust to new situations and moreover to take advantage of those occasions is essential in entrepreneurship, the thesis considers the last relationship of the triangle between entrepreneurship and play in the following chapter.

## 2.4 Entrepreneurship – play

As the third relationship, the thesis now analyzes the relationship between entrepreneurship and play. First, the study considers entrepreneurship as a learning process due to its continuous transformation. Further, the study proceeds with observing play in organizations and deliberating about the requirements for play. Also, the thesis proposes that play as a coping method plays a major part in adjusting to the market changes, although the role of play in an organizational context is not fully established. Lastly, the thesis discusses the meaning of motivation in relationship with entrepreneurship and play.

In terms of research literature, play seems to occur more often in organizational settings compared to entrepreneurial context. This indicates the unawareness of playful action as an influencer of entrepreneurship. The lack of research within the relationship between entrepreneurship and play makes it more complicated to justify the significance of this liaison. However, in order to substitute the shortage of research in the entrepreneurial context, this study resorts occasionally to the studies conducted in the organizational setting. Organizational entrepreneurship refers to entrepreneurial actions appearing in an organizational setting. On the other hand, Hjorth defines entrepreneurship as “a form of social creativity” in which strategical actions are taken in order to generate room for play, innovation and change in an organized surrounding (Hjorth 2005: 387). The word ‘strategical’ suggests that entrepreneurship is something that can be managed and, at least to some extent, intentionally generated. Play requires space in order to cherish. What is particularly interesting in Hjorth’s statement is that it emphasizes the importance of transformation taking place in ‘an organized surrounding’. In other words, this argument suggests that in order to something to be considered as entrepreneurial, it needs to be realized in a preceding environment. Only an acknowledged environment may engender a change. Further, play serves entrepreneurship by providing an impulse to creative thinking process which may lead to actual innovations. In an organizational setting, play often indicates social activity with other individuals. Despite the fact that an entrepreneur might act alone, there is still a demand for social activity in the form of

maintaining a discourse with its audience. Although the effect of play in encouraging entrepreneurship has been more acknowledged within the organizational setting, the state of the relationship is yet rather tenuous. In addition, the role of play in entrepreneurship is even more obscure and there is a great need for research and knowledge within the topic.

#### **2.4.1 Entrepreneurship as a learning process**

Due to the fact that entrepreneurship consists of constantly managing the ambiguity caused by the market situation changes, entrepreneurship can be easily considered as a learning process. In order to stay profitable, entrepreneurs have to learn from their mistakes and continuously practice their readiness to turn challenges into opportunities. Puhakka has researched learning in organizations and discovered that learning in an organizational context “is not any more about finding out what the ingredients of the game are but merely how to renew the game” (2007: 20). Moreover, Rieber describes a learning environment as “a space where the resources, time, and reasons are available to a group of people to nurture, support, and value their learning of a limited set of information and ideas” (2001, p. 3). Although mentioning “a group of people” in the learning environment, Rieber (2001) further states that learning has a social aspect even if there is only one person in that space. There is also some contradiction in the space of learning. The learning environment can be described both as something particular and highly concentrated although at the same time the framework of this space is ambiguous. Also, the learning outcomes vary and might be challenging to forecast. Even though the results depend highly on the resources provided in the learning environment, the conditions have even greater impact on the eventual learning outcomes. Moreover, the willingness and motivation of the participant to learn are clear indicators of learning development. (Rieber 2001: 3.)

The essence of entrepreneurship is to generate innovations which bring value to an existing issue. In order to contribute to the prevailing solution or to propose a totally

detached approach, new knowledge needs to be developed. When regarding entrepreneurship as a learning process, it is relevant to consider how experiential learning theory (ELT) and its four phases of *experiencing*, *reflecting*, *thinking*, and *acting* (Kolb & Kolb 2010: 27) occur in an entrepreneurial process of generating innovations. Since entrepreneurship is difficult to generate artificially, it is coherent to assume that most probably entrepreneurial ideas are contrived through personal experiences and perceptions which are then further processed into something tangible. In the very beginning of a nascent entrepreneurial process, received experiences are utilized as an impulse to reflect other previous as well as illusive experiences. These may be further harnessed as a guide to make conclusions of the detected conflicts or deficiencies related to the existing knowledge. This learning model consists of phases such as having a *concrete experience*, labelling it with *abstract conceptualization*, viewing it through *reflective observation*, and finally resulting in *active experimentation* in which the learning experience is deepened and enriched by repeating the cycle with alterations (Kolb & Kolb 2010: 27).

Proyer (2011) has examined the relationship between adult playfulness and academic achievement. Indeed, playfulness can be related to higher academic performance, for example in terms of examination results. Playfulness may also explain the motivation to learn new skills. In fact, students participating in the research were offered a chance to improve their performance by doing some extra reading, however this material was not required to master in order to pass the exam. Interestingly, students considering themselves as playful seemed more motivated to study also the additional material in order to perform as well as possible. (Proyer 2011: 463.) Proyer (2011) explains this phenomenon in a way that due to the association of playfulness and the characteristics of a non-serious, less diligent and self-indulgent person, - which are not necessarily taken as the most appropriate features of effective individuals – students who identified themselves as playful may have considered themselves also less intelligent. Moreover, the results of the study indicate that individuals with creative aspects of playfulness correlated with weaker self-evaluation in intelligence. According to Proyer (2011), the reasoning behind this effect can be that people who consider themselves as less intelligent may feel the



need to substitute their deficiency with trying to be more creative. People may also feel forced to “choose between being creative and imaginative or being good in convergent thinking” or people may simply do the extra work because of feeling motivated to the challenge. As a conclusion, Proyer (2011) suggests that playfulness may indeed support learning by helping the students to response to the demands of the academic assignment. It has also been brought up whether playfulness may improve acquiring new knowledge, which in turn is ought to lead to higher academic performances. (Proyer 2011: 466.)

When returning to the perspective of viewing entrepreneurship as a learning process, Proyer’s (2011) results indicate substantial support to this notion. Entrepreneurs can be seen as experts in their own specified field of industry. In order to become an expert a great amount of work, focus, and effort is needed. Not only do entrepreneurs need to master their core competence, but many other areas of business too in order to make their operation profitable. Further, being playful, spontaneous and persistent can be seen as appropriate characteristics for entrepreneurs. Doing extra work in order to reach the best performances goes hand in hand with the association of entrepreneurs being all in with their business ideas because they bear the consequences of both succeeding as well as failing. Further, entrepreneurship can be considered as reinventing something or oneself. Therefore, in entrepreneurship it is essential to be able to consider an issue in a different light, from a dissimilar perspective than previously, and to have the desire to make a change to the prevailing domain. Approaching a situation from a different point of view, being able to convert existing knowledge, and employing it in another context, are the key points in entrepreneurship. In order to intensify the usefulness of prevalent knowledge in a new context requires a boost in the line of thought, something to stimulate the brain to withdraw from designated limitations.

According to Kolb and Kolb (2019) in order to create new and to transform prior knowledge through personal experiences, this concept of “*deep learning*” has been proven to benefit from play. Moreover, deep learning consists of the stages of

“experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting”. These stages are essential in entrepreneurship since previous experiences can be taken from one context to other and transformed into something innovative through reflecting and thinking processes. Moreover, as entrepreneurship requires a sense of practicality in reality, acting is an inevitable part of entrepreneurship. Ludic space for play supports these stages of deep learning and can be defined as “a free and safe space that provides the opportunity for individuals to play with their potentials and ultimately commit themselves to learn, develop, and grow”. (Kolb & Kolb 2010: 27.) Moreover, Kolb and Kolb (2010) remark that in order for a learner to take advantage of all the stages of the learning cycle, the ludic space for play must be open for the learner to enter in it as their true self. The learning space must be supportive and challenging at the same time, and moreover highlight the fact that the learner is responsible for one’s own development in becoming an expert within the provided, sufficient amount of time. (Kolb/Kolb 2010 p. 45.)

The reason why play may have a significant role in entrepreneurship derives from the conception of play as a space for freedom where one can – safely and exempted from all inner and outer restrictions - use imagination in fantasizing new ideas and combinations. Unfortunately, especially adults are less likely to interact with playfulness. As Kolb and Kolb (2010) state “We are skilled at “playing” social and professional roles, which ironically, discourage us to play.” (Kolb & Kolb 2010: 31.) Acquiring new knowledge and taking a fresh perspective in order to reinvent something entrepreneurial demands for a change in the ordinary plan of action. First of all, play may be useful when trying to come up with new ideas and inspiration. Play offers a secure place for stepping out of one’s status quo and creates space for diverse idealization where the mind can trifle with various alterations. Since in entrepreneurship distinguishing oneself from others is essential, in order to do so, extraordinary thinking process may be a prerequisite to generate new innovations. Second of all, play offers a secure environment for idea verification. Constructing something concrete from an idea requires surveying various options and conducting several experiments before the concept is expedient to be produced. Failing attempts may however be tremendous for an entrepreneur if these take place in reality.

Play, on the other hand, offers a stimulating and fertile environment for fostering entrepreneurship through kaleidoscopic endeavor and sometimes discouraged failure. In contrary to the real life, the environment of play offers opportunities and safety to propound and explore even the most absurd ideas (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 97). Entrepreneurs may use play to give an idea a trial run and therefore to eliminate any grievances which may harm the establishment of the actual invention in practical terms. In a sense, play gives a chance to learn from the mistakes before they happen in reality.

#### **2.4.2 Play in organizations**

The According to Hjorth et al. 'play' refers to the interactive, humane, progress of new creations, balancing between 'knowing and not-knowing' as well as bearing the responsibility of one's actions (Hjorth et al. 2018: 163 – 164). In addition, playfulness relates to a trait which describes a person who approaches situations "in a nonserious manner". According to Petelczyc, Capezio, Wang, Restubog and Aquino, nonserious can be explained as an attitude which allows one to free oneself from the restrictions of the prevailing patterns. (Petelczyc et al. 2018, p. 170.) Moreover, it refers to open mindedness, spontaneity and even to a certain degree of foolishness which all persuade a person to unwind and express one's most absurd ideas.

*"When children play, they often create space for themselves within the place we have prescribed for them. In the place of a home, even under the dinner table, we can find them creating a space for imagination, (serious) play, and resistance. This space can become their shielded house. Or it can become a specific creation, actualizing the images of their imagination. This space is related to the home but resists it in having become an "other" space, differentiated in spacing — a heterotopia." (Hjorth 2005: 392.)*

Although this quote represents play in childhood, this study supports the notion that play is useful also in adulthood. Just as in childhood, play can help to create space for

imagination in unusual places, such as in one's work. Moreover, heterotopias are pivotal in creating organizational entrepreneurship as they can be considered as spaces in the "reigning order" which however allow opportunities for every-day imagination and creativity (Hjorth 2005: 392). The human nature encourages to create space – heterotopias – for "passion", "desire" and "play" which is likely to emerge in the form of entrepreneurship and creativity (Hjorth 2005: 396 – 397). Moreover, previous research has discovered that heterogeneity and openness create "new in-betweens" (Hjorth 2014) and these so-called "gaps" can be filled with new and innovative solutions (Hjorth et al. 2018: 157).

In an organizational setting, previous research has identified job complexity, environmental threat, time and space for play, and individual differences as the factors which are likely to increase play (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 108). Moreover, a high level of stress is likely to reduce the occurrence of play (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 111). Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) state that the essence of the work has a great impact on the opportunity for one to utilize play at work. Those individuals who have relatively high autonomy and low supervision at work are more likely to be able to consider various strategies, approaches and operations as well as to plan their timetable, in other words to utilize play in their work. In addition, the more complex tasks are involved the more cognitive processes such as analyzing, problem-solving, and experimentation are required and the more likely play is utilized as a tool to tackle the complexity of work. (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 109.) The environmental threat as an indicator for the appearance of play in an organizational context refers to the impact any external threat has on the likelihood to use play. Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) state that typically, organizational threats have a negative influence in experimentation, additional testing and eventually in playfulness. Moreover, in threatening situations organizations are likely to reduce research on new knowledge and increase supervision in order to ensure the effectiveness of their available resources. Therefore, organizations tend to consider play as a less valuable remedy for escaping the threat. (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 110 – 111.)

However, Mainemelis and Ronson suggest that organizations may reap the benefits of play, and vice versa, avoid the risks caused by this erratic action by clearly indicating appropriate time and space for play (2006: 111). Since play may have significant effects on increasing creativity and innovativeness within a company, it should be fostered. However, play also induces organizational costs and there is no guarantee that the possible benefits of play will cover the expenses of it. In their research Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) discovered that both employees and managers are less willing to use play as a tool in their work when they expect their supervisors to have a low threshold to punish them in case of an accident. In contrast, employees and managers are more likely to play at work when there is a clear indication of time and space meant for play. (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 112.) By indicating clear time and space for play, organizations may ensure that organizational members have the possibility to bear their responsibilities and contribute to achieving the organizational goals while implementing playfulness and creativity. Individual differences also have an impact on the appearance of play in an organizational setting. Mainemelis and Ronson propose that play is polymorphous and may therefore have great variation in the forms and degrees as well as in the levels of social action. (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 113 – 114.)

Rieber refers to play, which has the purpose to accomplish some outcomes, with a definition of “serious play”. Serious play can be distinguished from play in a sense that unlike play typically, serious play has an objective other than to merely provide a liberating space free from restraints. Nevertheless, serious play follows the same principles of play and fosters creativity as the antecedent of new ideas. In education, Rieber proposes that serious play may take place in a notion of “experience first, explain later”. This means that students are predisposed to a learning experience which they may not immediately know how to utilize, but later this may turn out to be a beneficial ground for further development. (Rieber 2001: 4 – 5.)

What is important to remember in the relationship between entrepreneurship and play is that “uncertainty, fluidity, and relative freedom from external constraint are key

elements of play” (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 109) and therefore the features of both factors support each other greatly. In addition to the above-mentioned means, organizations may encourage play for example by investing on stimulating work premises. Playful office designs have been proven to have the possibility of increasing organizational creativity, sensibility and imagination which may result in organizational entrepreneurship (Hjorth et al. 2018: 163). This may derive from the fact that original surroundings create space for diversity and play giving a permission to think differently and be creative with one’s work. Creative office designs may also express acceptance of play within the organization and therefore diminish the stress among the members by indicating where and when play is desired.

#### **2.4.3 Play as a coping method**

Elkind has stated that “When we work, we adapt ourselves to our environment; when we play, we adapt our world to fit our imagination” (2008: 3). This quote describes play as a coping method. Moreover, play has a central part in cherishing imagination which is vital in entrepreneurship. One of the most fundamental features of entrepreneurship is to be original. Originality in entrepreneurship signifies distinguishing oneself from the others by offering novel alternatives that benefit the customers significantly. Moreover, imagination is in a key role in the process of discovering creative business opportunities. Imagination represents the playfulness in one’s thinking process which has a tremendous impact on generating creative ideas. Further, play enhances problem-solving process. “In play people practice framing problems in new ways, exploring alternative solutions, and evaluating different possibilities” (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 102). Advanced problem-solving skills are essential for entrepreneurs in order to overcome the obstacles in the life course of a product or service. Since many of these problems require exceptional acumen, play is an effective way to amplify the functions of the brain pertinent in these actions.

In fact, previous neuroscientific research has discovered that play affects the functional ability of the brain. Moreover, Kolb and Kolb (2010) present that different modes of play stimulate certain parts of the brain. Previous research has discovered that “Epistemic behavior is essentially characterized by efficient, economical and goal specific behavior, whereas ludic behavior concentrates on means rather than ends.” (Kolb & Kolb 2010: 30.) Therefore, when taking an entrepreneur’s perspective to coping, it may signify for example coping to the market situation in order to find a profitable niche or trying to solve a problem that is threatening the profits of the business. In this hypothetical situation one might presume that whereas finding a niche and building a creative business idea around it requires more of a ludic behavior with innovative and explorative approach, solving a particular problem may demand for epistemic behavior, which typically employs more effective and specific approach. However, as entrepreneurs may identify themselves with several entrepreneurial identity roles, utilizing both epistemic and ludic behavior is relevant in certain contexts. An entrepreneur may use epistemic behavior to first analyze a problem carefully and later utilize ludic behavior in order to discover various alternatives to solve the problem. Another concern in entrepreneurship that play serves, is the opportunity for the brain to get a break from a constant intellectual work. At times, in order to come up with a magnificent idea, the mind needs processing time and a distraction from a rather intense contemplation. Indeed, many ideas and inspiration tend to ascend when the mind is not forced to make rational conclusions. “Incubation” describes the state of mind in which the brain is given a rest, yet ideas are being appraised subconsciously (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 103). Play can offer space for incubation in which ideas need to be given time to evolve into actual entrepreneurial ideas. Likewise, Elkind quotes Jean Piaget saying “Play is the answer to the question: how does anything new come about?” (2008: 6). The thesis acknowledges the effect of play in entrepreneurship and thus further explores the types of play different entrepreneur identity roles invoke.

Proyer (2014) has examined the perceived functions of playfulness and discovered that play indeed has a wide range of identified components. Not only can play be identified

as a mediator of positive sensations but as a significant cognitive function. According to Proyer (2014) playfulness can be considered as a component of expression, problem solving, creativity, personal development, pleasure, communication, and wellness. Due to its extensive role as a facilitator of many positively charged functions, playfulness can be an effective coping method especially in highly stressful situations, such as in a risk of burnout. (Proyer 2014: 247.) In fact, Proyer states that playful adults seem to have a higher tolerance for unorganized work environment and higher liking in abstract art in comparison to adults who were identifies as less playful (2012: 989). Hence, playfulness may have a significant role in entrepreneurship as a coping method in the often highly stressful and complex environment. Moreover, as discussed previously playfulness can be used as a substitute for any missing or inadequate skill. As Proyer discovered in a study, people who estimated themselves as less intelligent scored higher in playfulness (2011: 466). The findings further highlight the fact that playful individuals were found to do extra work in order to replace any deficiency caused by the lack of knowledge. Consequently, playfulness may increase motivation to perform well in a certain task. Also, as play can be a mediator to learn new skills, encourage creative thinking process, and to manage a complex work environment.

#### **2.4.4 Requirements for play**

In addition to certain personal characteristics, playfulness requires a certain context in order to flourish. Caillois (2001) defines play as: (1) *free*, (2) *separate*, (3) *uncertain*, (4) *unproductive*, (5) *governed by rules*, and (6) *make-believe*. Free refers to the fact that participating in play must happen from the free choice of an individual. With the definition of separate Caillois (2001) means that time and space within playful action must be distinguished from the features of the reality. Uncertain in turn relates to the fact that nothing in play can be interpreted nor expected beforehand. Caillois (2001) explains that play itself can be seen as unproductive, hence no benefits should be required as the outcome of this action. Although the point governed by rules brings a contradiction to the defined qualities of play which should be free of any restrictions, this notion



underlines the precondition of play as distinct from the prevailing rules and laws. With the last notion of make-believe, Caillois refers to the feature of play as separated from the reality but instead as its own imaginative environment. (Caillois 2001: 9-10.) Heimann and Roepstorff (2018) state that any playful action should support a state of autonomy in addition to finding personal meaning in the conducted task. According to the authors factors such as autonomy, competency, and relatedness are likely to increase intrinsic motivation. Therefore, an individual is not expected to experience personal interest in an activity if being forced to do it, and unable to see it as valuable or if the person feels incompetent, or unrelated to it. (Heimann & Roepstorff 2018: 11.)

Heimann and Roepstorff (2018) introduce playfulness as a means to improve intrinsic motivation. They further state that “Experiencing autonomy, that is, the feeling of freedom and meaningfulness of own actions, seems key to adopting a playful stance” (Heimann & Roepstorff 2018: 12.) In addition, Rieber (2001) remarks that motivation has a substantial role in facilitating learning and considers these two elements as inseparable from each other. However, Rieber claims that motivation is the more significant factor of this relation (Rieber 2001: 2) since without personal interest in the subject, deep learning is challenging to achieve. Fillis and Rentschler (2010) state that individuals who are prone to be intrinsically motivated are likely to become highly immersed in an activity and less extrinsically motivated by a reward. This statement is likely to be verified in entrepreneurship. As Fillis and Rentschler put it, entrepreneurs “exhibit playfulness with their ideas because of their freedom to take risks and ability to explore new cognitive pathways”. (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 64.) Intrinsic motivation, autonomy, competency and personal interest are all notions which are likely to appear in entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur should have a personal interest in the business and find the results of one’s operations valuable. Moreover, the entrepreneur should be motivated intrinsically by the content of the business itself as well as extrinsically motivated by the financial aspect that an entrepreneur is in charge of most of the costs and is therefore driven by the possibility of making profit. This type of approach refers to the motivational synergy

introduced by Amabile as the combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational elements which support each other (Amabile 1997a: 18).

### 3 Methodology

This part introduces the applied research methodologies of the study. After explaining the methodological approach and the research philosophy, this part further discusses the data collection and analysis of the research material. Lastly, this chapter justifies the validity and reliability of the study. In order to thoroughly explain the methodological choices and approaches of this study, the concept of The research ‘onion’ by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016: 124) is applied.

#### 3.1 Methodological approach

According to Saunders et al. research philosophy refers to the presumptions, beliefs and approaches which are more or less acknowledged but nevertheless have an influence on the interpretation of the surrounding realities when developing new knowledge (2016: 124). *Ontology* describes the assumptions about the reality around a certain topic. In turn, *epistemology* refers to the assumptions of what kind of knowledge is comprised as the admitted knowledge (Saunders et al. 2016:127). Moreover, *axiology* incorporates the notion that personal values and beliefs, whether the researcher’s or the research participants’, will affect the way the research is implemented (Saunders et al. 2016:128).

*Ontologically*, the thesis applies a subjectivist approach and believes that the reality of the study area is constructed by individuals as social actors. Moreover, as entrepreneurship incorporates a strong relationship between the entrepreneur and the customer base, the thesis believes that the reality in entrepreneurship is constructed partially through *social constructionism*, meaning that social actors construct the reality by sharing their interpretations and experiences in interaction. (Saunders et al. 2016: 130.)

*Axiologically*, the researcher has delimited the scope of the study to creativity and play, giving these two concepts more value than other features of entrepreneurship. *Epistemologically*, the study relies on interpretations as a legitimate base for knowledge (Saunders et al. 2016: 127).

Given these beliefs the philosophy of the thesis is *interpretivism*. Moreover, the research paradigm of the study is *interpretive*. This refers to the fundamental urge of the research to find out how do people comprehend the surrounding environment. *Interpretivism* also relates to the balance between rationality and irrationality. (Saunders et al. 2016: 134.) Since creativity and play in entrepreneurship are considered essential yet rather subliminal, the study seeks to clarify how entrepreneurs with different entrepreneurial identity roles perceive these two concepts in their own work. In other words, as an interpretivist research, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the social world and context of entrepreneurship (Saunders et al. 2016: 140). Through an in-depth review the purpose of the study is to find irrationalities between the interpretations of different entrepreneurs. Rather than trying to define coherent, generalizable, or objective forms of creativity and play in entrepreneurship, this study focuses on the interpretations of the interviewed entrepreneurs and emphasizes the complex, subjective, and experimental views of individuals (Saunders et al. 2016: 136).

Due to the philosophical reasonings, a qualitative research approach was chosen as the basis of the study. Moreover, the study applies a *subjective* view point, meaning that the reality is defined by the perceptions of social actors (Saunders et al. 2016: 130). More precisely, the ultimate purpose of the study is to increase understanding on how entrepreneurs perceive creativity and play in their own personal work. Since entrepreneurs may identify themselves with several entrepreneurial identity roles at the same time, the perceived opinions may be prone to changes. Entrepreneurial identity roles may for example vary depending on the stage of the entrepreneurial process, personal interests towards current topics, motivation to certain work tasks, and competitive situation of the market among many other factors. Although the study acknowledges that whereas entrepreneurship may be perceived as an *objective entity*, since there are some common rules and prerequisites for a business endeavor to be referred to as entrepreneurial action, the ultimate belief of the study is though that entrepreneurship is multiform and defined by social actors (Saunders et al. 2016: 129). Despite the fact that objectivism

may have an influence in defining entrepreneurship as a concept, the purpose of the study is to review different types of creativity and play that individual entrepreneurs with distinct entrepreneurial role identities mostly utilize, and therefore the applied assumption is subjectivist.

The approach to theory development is abductive. Abductive approach means that the study utilizes a combination of both deductive and inductive research approaches (Saunders et al. 2016: 148). Whereas deductive research approach refers to testing existing theory with hypotheses or other assumptions of the relationship between at least two topics (Saunders et al. 2016: 146), inductive approach incorporates the opposite of this and approaches the development of knowledge from first collecting data and then explain the findings with existing theory (Saunders et al. 2016: 147). Moreover, the study utilizes abductive approach due to the fact that the impact of different entrepreneurial identity roles on the behaviors and actions of entrepreneurs in practice is yet rather obscure. Abductive approach allows the study to identify different themes and possibly merge these into a conceptual theory frame (Saunders et al. 2016: 148).

By *research design* Saunders et al. refer to the execution plan according to which the research question will be answered to. Moreover, it is a proof that the researcher has paid attention to all of the phases of a research process from defining the research question, identifying the appropriate theory and data base to explaining the analysis and discussion of the findings, and clarified how to implement these in a particular study. (Saunders et al. 2016: 163–164.) As the present study seeks to increase knowledge about how individual entrepreneurs utilize different types of creativity and play in their daily work, the study relies on *non-numeric data* such as words as well as narratives and therefore follows a *qualitative method research design* (Saunders et al. 2016: 165). The purpose of the study is to analyze the relationship between entrepreneurs with different entrepreneurial identity roles and different types of creativity and play. Given the *subjective* character of the focus point and the conceptual framework utilized as the basis of the study, qualitative research will most accurately enable such analysis (Saunders et al. 2016: 168).

The nature of the research project is *exploratory*. The purpose of an exploratory research is to gain a profound and realistic insight of what is happening inside a particular topic (Saunders et al. 2016: 174). In the present study, the main objective is to increase understanding of the relationship between entrepreneurial identity roles, creativity and play. Although previous research has determined creativity and play as valuable assets in entrepreneurship and identified different entrepreneurial identity roles, the liaison between these variables is yet obscure. Moreover, the study asks open questions to allow the interviewee to more freely talk about those themes which are most important in his or her personal context.

### **3.2 Data collection and analysis**

The methodological choice of the study is *mono method qualitative study* since the data is collected by using only *semi-structured interviews* and followed by *qualitative analytical procedure* (Saunders et al. 2016: 168). In order to best answer to the research question, the thesis applied qualitative data collection approach. Moreover, the *time horizon* of the study is *cross-sectional* since the purpose of the thesis is to provide a particular state of the relationship between entrepreneurial identity roles, creativity and play in a particular time frame (Saunders et al. 2016: 200). The data was collected only through interviews as a single data collection technique and further, solely for the purposes of this particular thesis. Four of the interviews were conducted over the phone and one in person. The participating entrepreneurs were from various areas of business; service industry, hospitality, physiotherapy, media, and technology (see Table 1). The thesis utilized five semi-structured interviews. As the three main themes of the thesis are entrepreneurial roles, creativity and play, the questions revolved around these central themes taking shape in alternative forms, based on the course of the interview (see Table 2).

Pseudonym	Industry	Interview method
Entrepreneur A	Service industry	Face to face
Entrepreneur B	Hospitality	Call (phone)
Entrepreneur C	Physiotherapy	Call (phone)
Entrepreneur D	Media marketing	Call (phone)
Entrepreneur E	Technology/online sales	Call (phone)

**Table 1.** The backgrounds of the interviewees.

Before the interview, all of the entrepreneurs were given a short overview of the topic and key themes of the thesis. Warm up question was typically asked and in order to introduce the following theme. Follow up questions as well as the researcher's additional comments were utilized to receive a deeper insight of the interviewee's response. Open questions were asked in order to allow more freedom for the interviewee to steer the direction of the discussion. Also, the questions were contemplated beforehand in order to avoid asking questions which can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" response. In addition to the questions, further discussion was employed if necessary. More informal discussion around the themes was utilized in order to better understand and capture the genuine opinion of the interviewee.

Theme:	Questions:
Entrepreneurial identity roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you become an entrepreneur? / How did you come up with your business idea?</li> <li>• What is the most entrepreneurial aspect of your personality?</li> <li>• How would you describe yourself as an entrepreneur (inventor, founder, developer)?</li> <li>• What motivates you in your work? (The area of business, personal challenge, being the best/only provider in the market, money, status, lifestyle)</li> </ul>
Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you define creativity?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the meaning of creativity in entrepreneurship?</li> <li>• Would you describe yourself as creative? Please explain why and how does your creativity show.</li> <li>• How does creativity appear in your work? Which areas/work tasks require creativity the most, why?</li> <li>• What are the prerequisites for creativity? (resources, knowledge, environment, motivation, incentive, reward, social interaction)</li> <li>• How can creativity be increased/enhanced?</li> </ul>
Play/playfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would you describe yourself as a playful adult?</li> <li>• How would you describe play/playfulness?</li> <li>• Do you use play in your own work? If so, how?</li> <li>• What kinds of forms of play? (serious play, testing, scenarios, preparation, visualizing, idealization, physical creations, crafting, building, storytelling)</li> <li>• What is play used for? (problem-solving, divergent thinking, boosting up creativity, coping method, recovery, increase sociality)</li> </ul>

**Table 2.** Structure of the interviews.

### 3.3 Validity and reliability of the study

Ethics and the quality of the study are important topics to consider prior to determining the research design. In order to protect the ethicalness of the thesis, the study was conducted only for the purposes of this particular thesis. In addition, all of the interviewees volunteered to participate in the study and the results are presented anonymously. In terms of quality, it is essential that the research design is accurately defined to answer



to the research question. Moreover, it is necessary to exclude the researcher's personal opinion from the analysis of the findings. (Saunders et al. 2016: 201–202.) Although the philosophy of the thesis is *interpretivism*, the analysis and conclusions of the study are based on the subjective view points of the interviewees. Moreover, the validity and reliability have a significant impact on the quality of the research.

The *reliability* of the research can be explained as the consistency and replication of the results, in case the same research was duplicated. In turn, the *validity* of the research relates to the accuracy of the used research methods, transparency and argumentation of the analysis as well as overall generalizability of the results. (Saunders et al. 2016: 202.) Saunders et al. define *participant error*, *participant bias*, *researcher error*, and *researcher bias* as the threats to reliability. Participant error refers to a factor, such as timing of when the interview is conducted, that may have an influence on the interviewee's performance. (Saunders et al. 2016: 203.) In order to avoid participant bias, the interviewees were given the freedom to select the time which would best fit to their schedule. Moreover, the interviewees were given the possibility to choose in which environment they concluded the interview. Participant bias relates to false answers given by the interviewee. This can be caused for example by the social pressure and fear of having to deal with consequences if given an unwanted answer. (Saunders et al. 2016: 203.) To avoid this risk, the thesis remains the anonymity of each participant. Research error means that the researcher interprets the answers of the interviewees falsely. This can be caused for example by the low level of energy or other inconvenient time to conduct the interview. (Saunders et al. 2016: 203.) When planning the schedule of the interviews this matter was considered by the researcher. Enough time was reserved to conduct each interview in a thorough manner. Moreover, the researcher was not in a hurry or feeling stressed, which might have influenced her ability to interpret the results objectively. This can be referred to as researcher bias meaning that the interviewer is unable to refrain from making subjective assumptions (Saunders et al. 2016: 203).

The *validity* of the research refers to the matter of whether the study is really achieving the objectives and providing accurate knowledge of the intended topic (Saunders et al. 2016: 204). In the present study the validity of the research was considered when planning the execution of the interviews. Themes for the semi-structured interviews were carefully selected in order to ensure that the questions covered the research scope yet that they were not biased by the researchers own interpretations. Moreover, the interviews were conducted in a private setting in which the participants were able to give honest answers anonymously. Prior to the questions, each definition was explained to ensure that the participants understood the question correctly.

In terms of *generalizability* Saunders et al. refer to the ability to generalize the findings of the study in another context (2016: 204). Due to the complexity and flexibility of defining a specific entrepreneurial identity role, the purpose of the study is not to generalize the findings in any other context. However, the purpose of the study is to increase the knowledge of the relationship between different entrepreneurial identity roles and creativity and play given the present sample group. Since the research of entrepreneurial identity roles invoking different types of creativity and play is in its initial phase, this study aims to provide indicative findings of the relationship between these variables.

## 4 Empirical findings

In order to provide empirical support to the theoretical findings, the thesis now analyzes the conducted interviews. The purpose of this part is to acquire practical evidence of the types of creativity and play entrepreneurs with different entrepreneurial identities utilize in their entrepreneurial processes. In order to serve the purposes of this thesis and provide anonymous information of the interviewees, the entrepreneurs are referred to as Entrepreneur A, Entrepreneur B, Entrepreneur C, Entrepreneur D, and Entrepreneur E.

### 4.1 Entrepreneurial backgrounds

In this chapter, the thesis will go through the backgrounds of each entrepreneur before going into a deeper analysis of the types of creativity and play the interviewed entrepreneurs described as a part of their entrepreneurial roles. To make it more convenient for the reader to comprise the various backgrounds of the entrepreneurs, the basic information of each entrepreneur is presented in a form of a table (see Table 3).

Entrepreneur A has a hair salon in Helsinki. She has had it for six years and currently there are no other employees. She became an entrepreneur by coincident. First, she did an internship at an acquaintance's hair salon. After learning about entrepreneurship and obtaining a positive conception about being an entrepreneur as well as about the opportunity of having the freedom to make all the decisions regarding the company, she became interested in having her own company sometime in the future. She then started as a hairdresser as a sole trader with chair rental salon until she established her own salon. Generally, she has always wanted to do things by herself, be in charge of her time schedule, and create something new. She is also diligent and considers that some of the most important prerequisites for successful entrepreneurship are ambitiousness and the willingness to work hard. Entrepreneur A considers herself mostly as a creator and developer because she likes to take things further and have various plans for the future. In

addition, she becomes more and more ambitious to develop herself and her skills and constantly utilizes new ways to develop the business.

*“I believe I’m mostly a creator... and also a developer. I like to develop things constantly for the future, and also the ambition to develop grows all the time. In hair business you have to develop yourself constantly, for example Instagram is a useful platform to learn new and also trainings are essential. As an entrepreneur, development makes you stand out better from everyone else in the market.”*

Entrepreneur A believes that the fundamental pillar of successful business is constant development. Without continuous development the business will suffer and eventually fail because it will not lure customers and persuade them to utilize the company’s services by offering outdated services. Recently, developing and improving customer service has become more and more important. Customers expect the entrepreneur to be truly passionate about their field of business and will not tolerate moderate attitude towards running the business. Moreover, the entrepreneur needs to not only be extremely interested in the business itself, but in the customer too and see each customer as an individual.

*“What’s important in addition to constant development is that nowadays customer service has to be extremely high quality. ‘Ok’ is not enough in any case, it’s not enough to be almost interested in one’s job. As an entrepreneur you need to be truly interested in the customer’s needs and even beyond – not just interested in the hair stuff but interested in the person itself.”*

According to Entrepreneur A the most motivating factor in her work is the creativity aspect and moreover being able to give joy and happiness to others. Despite of having to consider her customers’ time schedules and working for their needs, the freedom of deciding how much, when and where she works are some additional motivators.

Entrepreneur A believes that money should never be a motivator because it will show as a negative vibe to the customers.

Entrepreneur B has a restaurant in Porvoo offering lunch and catering services. The restaurant has been operating since 2001 initiating in the golf course and in a ski resort before moving to the swimming hall. Entrepreneur B has also had a grocery shop which is not operating currently. The restaurant is operated by two entrepreneurs. Entrepreneur B became an entrepreneur because his friend asked him to become a partner for a restaurant at the golf course. The partnership lasted for seven years until the other partner wanted to transfer into another field of business and Entrepreneur B continued with their existing business plan. Entrepreneur B identifies himself mostly between a developer and a founder, although in his work he needs all of the entrepreneurial identity roles.

*“Well I believe I’m somewhere between a developer and a founder. Although I actually do everything. But with development it’s more of like that... try to make things differently and try to avoid staying in the same situation for too long.”*

Moreover, he considers flexibility and persistence as his personal characteristics which are mostly related to entrepreneurship. Also, the fact that he wants to work for himself and believes in what he is doing are essential factors in successful entrepreneurship.

He considers development as the most important aspect in entrepreneurship due to the fact that products and services should not remain as the same over time. In gradual development testing, selling as well as marketing new products and services are important in order to find out what is profitable and what is not.

*“The development of products is essential. Testing and selling and marketing these and trying to find out whether they’re profitable or not.”*

Reflecting back to his entrepreneurial process in the very beginning there was a great need for an inventor role as idealization and creating the business idea were in a central part. When actually establishing the restaurant both the founder role and a lot of external help and other resources were needed. Although development is a prerequisite for remaining profitable in the business, at times maintaining the operations stable is also important. On the other hand, in great changes adaptability is essential in order to stay in the market.

*“The founder role was in a central part when we just started. We also got a lot of help from people outside of the company. We were young and people with more experience helped us a lot. The beginning also included a lot of idealizing everything like products and it took some time. Then there have also been moments when it has been necessary to maintain the operations stable and in balance.”*

Entrepreneur B believes that forecasting the market and customer behavior has become more important in the current market situation in which restaurants no longer have a standard customer base. According to Entrepreneur B the biggest change in the business regarding lunch providers is that whereas previously restaurants had a rather stable customer base and the same customers came continuously to have lunch at a certain restaurant despite of the menu today’s customers are more inconsistent with their restaurant choices. Currently, customers check the menu online before deciding about where to go have lunch. Today customers have much more freedom and variety of choice and they are more often guided by their own eating habits and trends. Therefore, competition between restaurants for customers is more intense and restaurants should try to distinguish themselves from others with their own unique style.

*“Adaptability has been vital and also having a sense of what’s going on especially when there is no longer a stable customer base. So, believing in oneself and what*

*one is doing and thinking that we will handle this. Especially the 'lunch world' changes so much all the time. Whereas previously lunch restaurants were full of regular customers who, in principle, didn't check what there was on the menu but they just came to have lunch because they knew that the place serves good food and the level of quality is stable. But since the mobile world took off the customers check the menu before going to eat, it is so handy to just check what they are serving today. There are so many platforms listing several options it is so easy to take a look and see what you'd like to eat. So that has definitely changed the situation radically, there's no more of that stability there once used to be."*

Entrepreneur B is mostly motivated by his family and the possibility to influence his own schedule. Moreover, work supports his life style and allows him to invest on family-life and free time as much as wanted. Entrepreneur B states that although it is rather typical for Finnish entrepreneurs to work 10-12 hours a day and therefore to feel tired most of the time, in his company it has been a conscious decision to have enough free time and to avoid ending up in a situation in which the company takes the majority of the entrepreneur's daily time. Although Entrepreneur B is mostly intrinsically motivated, and one of the most significant motivators in his work is customer feedback – both positive and negative – he is also externally motivated by making profit with his business.

Entrepreneur C has a company providing physiotherapy services and fitness training. She has had the business running for three years and she is the only one working for the company. She just recently moved into the same facilities together with another entrepreneur offering Pilates and physiotherapy services, soon there will be four entrepreneurs operating in the same facilities. Moving together with another entrepreneur in her existing facilities was a financial decision and was based mostly on cooperation. Her previous location was also a rather temporary choice whereas the new facilities are more of a permanent decision. Entrepreneur C became an entrepreneur because there was a change of ownership in the previous company where she worked at. Due to this change the terms of her contract deteriorated radically. As it was challenging to find another

interesting and satisfying job in her field, she decided to become an entrepreneur. In the past, she had never dreamed or planned about becoming an entrepreneur and rather had the mindset that she will never become an entrepreneur. However, due to the situation, she had to quickly make the decision about starting her own company.

*“It was a very rapid decision [establishing her own company]. I would say that previously my attitude was so that I will never want to be an entrepreneur.”*

Moreover, she considers optimism as her biggest asset in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneur C can identify herself with all of the entrepreneurial identity roles, particularly for the reason that she is the only one working for the company. However, she believes a founder identity best fits with her personality because she has the mentality of “being forced to work”.

*“I think all of the roles are required in this thing, especially when doing this alone. But I’m not sure, in a sense I believe I am the founder. I would identify myself as a basic ‘manual worker’ in a sense that I just need to work.”*

She recalls that in the beginning of her entrepreneurial process the inventor was the strongest identity. The developer identity is also active on a daily basis because she tries to develop the operations continuously.

*“Of course, both inventor and developer are strong at the background too. And I am that type of person that there should always be something new and different.”*

Entrepreneur C is mostly motivated by the lifestyle and the freedom to determine both her working hours and the future of her company. Also, financial factors are motivating especially when comparing her situation between owning her own company and being an employee in someone else’s company. Entrepreneur C is also truly motivated by the work itself. Moreover, the freedom to come up with new ideas and employ those in



practice as well as having diverse work tasks which are not merely limited to customer service, are the most significant motivators in entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneur D has been an entrepreneur in a startup company since May 2018. The company has a platform for searching, comparing, and purchasing advertisement placements. The platform is one of a kind for marketing media but there are already similar types of platforms for searching for apartments and cars. The business plan of the company is two-fold in a sense that the company's customers consist of both media companies offering advertisement placements and advertisers seeking for places and channels where to post their advertisements. The first version of the platform was launched in the summer of 2018 and the company's operations cover advertisements in all media channels such as radio, newspapers, outdoor advertisements, and TV commercials. The company consists of four team members; one in Kuopio, one in Tampere, one in Espoo and one in Helsinki. Two of these members are sales persons and the other two are program developers. Entrepreneur D came up with this business idea with his friend in 2013. They were systematically trying to find good business ideas with the mindset of "What is this world still missing?". One day they noticed a building under construction wrapped in protective cover. They were surprised that there were no advertisements attached on this protective cover and started to research how could they get an advertisement up there. After several phone calls, they concluded that there should be a better, simpler way to get an advertisement attached on the cover, and their business idea about creating a platform for these purposes, was born. Also, in his previous occupation as a university teacher, he had noticed that although young students were excellent at searching for information and utilizing search tools in the Internet, defining which media channel would reach the target group of their own business plan most effectively, was rather challenging. Moreover, when estimating the costs of launching new products to the market and marketing them, the students seemed to fail in this. These experiences together with their empirical observations affirmed that there is a demand for this type of product in the market.

Entrepreneur D mostly identifies himself as an inventor and founder. An inventor identity was required especially in the very beginning of his entrepreneurial process, in which coming up with a feasible business idea required conscious analysis of various ideas. Later, a founder identity ascended since the gradual founding process demanded concrete actions. Entrepreneur D remarks that all identities are required in his entrepreneurial endeavor. However, as an entrepreneur in a startup company, his current role consists mostly of founding operations and developing the business, since the company still seeks for a more stable and sustainable profitable business model.

*"I believe in my job all of the entrepreneurial roles are combined. When thinking about a situation where there is no previous business model but something completely new is brought to the market, the inventor role is required in the first place. We went systematically through several market opportunities all summer long and tried to come up with the most interesting ones. When we came up with this idea, it was left to incubate in the background for a while, until I got a mental confirmation of the feasibility of this idea and felt sure that there is a demand for this in the market through my work as a university teacher and we then started to build the service. So, this action combined both inventor and founder roles. Now I'm in a sense in the founder-developer role currently, since our system is developing all the time."*

Entrepreneur D has always known he would like to be an entrepreneur. In addition, an entrepreneurial bachelor's degree program and acquired entrepreneurial experience through his doctoral studies have steered the way to becoming an entrepreneur. Entrepreneur D is motivated by intrinsic motivators. This derives from the fact that together with his business partner they invented something new and introduced something totally innovative to the market. Entrepreneur D believes that coming up with an innovative idea has a tremendous effect on his motivation and perspective of viewing the market situation.

*“My motivation is completely endogenous. Now when no one is telling me what should be done and the fact that our learning cycle is such that we developed something, introduced it to potential customers for the very first time at the end of 2017 and back then the system was a rather green fruit.”*

He also states that in order to have an objective influence on the media industry, the idea of such platform had to come from an outsider. In fact, none of the four persons within the company had any previous experience in the field of media advertisements. This affirms the fact that the company is rather objectively related to the media business and that they are intrinsically motivated to bring innovative solutions to the market. Through his work Entrepreneur D wants to create something new and different and moreover something that is remarkably beneficial for some part of the market. Hence, their platform changes radically the traditional ways of selling and buying advertisement placements for both the representatives of media organizations (sellers) as well as the advertiser (buyers).

*“And the customer interface is absolutely essential especially in such an operation in which we are building an untested model and trying to seek for the product market fit. Motivation comes from the urge of wanting to create something new, different and from my part I must say that I want to do something that brings tremendous value to at least one part of the market. This is such a tool which changes – it has been proven that it changes the way to work within the business industry, it changes the way to buy and sell. And it makes buying extremely easy in comparison to current habits. From the selling perspective it first of all digitalizes sales channels. It changes the sales person’s role and mission on the field in a sense that currently media sales are 99 percent of personal salesmanship. Whereas now we are building such tools that the advertiser can make the order by him/herself or then the sales person can, by using these tools, make an offer directly to the advertiser who can then, by using the same tools, accept the offer and this, using the same system eliminates manual work anyway.”*

Entrepreneur E is the chief executive officer (CEO) of a limited company with four other shareholders. The company was established in 2018. The company is an online store platform fully customized to the customer. The shareholders have developed an algorithm which recognizes each customer's personal style and hence the program can offer customers a fully customized set of products based on their personal style. Entrepreneur E first became an entrepreneur when she was 18 years old. She had a company together with her mother and one of the partners of her current company. They had a small online store importing blazers and suits for people performing in dog shows. After her first entrepreneurship project she and one of the current shareholders started to systematically think about what would be their next "real" business idea. In this process of coming up with a feasible business plan, they went through various business ideas for about a year sending their brainchild through WhatsApp voice messages whenever they had an inspiration. When coming up with the idea of their current business around Christmas in 2017, it felt like the right choice and they immediately knew this was something they wanted to start working on.

*"Together with my partner then we started to think about what could be our first "real" business idea. And then we almost for a year tossed ideas back and forward, I always sent her WhatsApp voice messages in the middle of the night after I had just come up with another good idea. And then when we came up with this idea, that we are currently working on, it felt like the right one immediately and we knew that this is the one we want to start working on. So, in a sense it was very easy since we felt that we have a good idea so it was very clear that this is what we are going to start developing."*

Further, entrepreneur E has always, more or less consciously, known she would like to become an entrepreneur. There are several entrepreneurs among her family in various fields of business so she was given the chance to follow close by the life of an entrepreneur. Also, her mother was an entrepreneur when she was a child, so entrepreneurship

has always felt as a natural way of living. Therefore, the threshold for her to become an entrepreneur was rather low. Entrepreneur E believes the most entrepreneurial aspect of her personality has been – already at a young age – her natural essence of taking the lead and embracing a leader role in any school assignment or group work. She has an inherent traction of organizing and delegating tasks, being in charge and making the effort to get things forward and make progress. In entrepreneurship she is most fascinated about doing as much as she can on her own and deciding about the future and development of the company. She enjoys making her own decisions without thinking about what others think about them. Also, being confident and independent and not taking any pressure of other people's opinions is another major part of her personality and she considers it as an advantage in entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneur E believes that in a small company inventor, founder and developer identities are all required. However, she mostly identifies herself as an inventor since innovating new things, dreaming big and coming up with various ideas is typical of her.

*“Especially when working in a small company all of these roles need to be employed. But out of these three options I believe it's the inventor that best relates to myself. As I mentioned before getting to work on this I almost for a year went through various ideas and developed those further for my business partner, so I would definitely say that coming up with something new and in a sense innovating and thinking and dreaming is typical to me.”*

In the very beginning of her entrepreneurial process she was mostly innovating and considering several ideas which might be profitable as a business. After coming up with the idea they wanted to start developing, she quickly realized she had to embrace the role of a founder and start organizing things in practice.

*“Absolutely it comes quite naturally when it is time to transit from the dreaming phase to that moment when you sign your name in all of the papers and should*

*have the money to establish a limited company and need to find new member to join the team. So, it very quickly changes into making things work in practice and establishing things, whether you want it or not. Of course, every entrepreneur, when signing the papers with your name, you at the latest then really are in charge of establishing and organizing all the things, so at that point you kind of like have to embrace the role.”*

In entrepreneurship she is mostly motivated by the freedom of deciding about her own schedule and being able to work at those times she finds it the most effective for her to work. Further, Entrepreneur E appreciates the opportunity to grow the company as much as she wants. Indeed, with a good business idea it is possible to expand globally and develop the company into an international organization. Also, given the field of business in which their company is operating she is mostly motivated about the unlimited development and growth opportunities the technology brings. Moreover, she enjoys the fact that in her current company all the operations take place virtually all over the world. With no need for a warehouse and supply chain to be involved and without having to consider the risks of inventory – unlike in her first company importing clothes – she assures to be mostly intrinsically motivated.

Entrepreneur	Field of business	Operating (years)	Number of employees	Entrepreneurial role	Describes him/herself as 'playful'	Motivator in entrepreneurship
Entrepreneur A	A hair salon	For 6 years	Currently, no other employees	Inventor/developer	Yes	Creativity, being able to give joy and happiness to others
Entrepreneur B	A restaurant offering lunch and	Since 2001	Two entrepreneurs	Developer/founder	Yes	Family, possibility of managing his

	catering services					own schedule
<b>Entrepreneur C</b>	Physiotherapy services and fitness training	3 years	No other employees	Founder	Yes	Lifestyle, freedom to determine her working hours and the future of the company
<b>Entrepreneur D</b>	A platform enabling searching for advertisement placements as well as comparing and purchasing these	Since May 2018	4 team members	Inventor/founder	Yes	Creating something new, different, and beneficial
<b>Entrepreneur E</b>	An online store platform fully customized to the customer, a developed algorithm which recognizes each customer's personal style and provides the customers fully customized	Since October 2018	A limited company with four shareholders	Inventor	No	Freedom of managing her schedule, growth opportunities

	set of products based on their personal style					
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**Table 3.** Entrepreneurial backgrounds.

## 4.2 Types of creativity

As one of the objectives of this thesis is to provide information about the types of creativity entrepreneurs with different entrepreneurial identity roles utilize, this chapter broadens the aspect of creativity in entrepreneurship. Starting with Entrepreneur A the study goes through each entrepreneur's conception regarding creativity in their own work. In order to facilitate data reviewing, the results are presented in a form of a table (see Table 4).

Entrepreneur A believes that creativity has a significant impact on entrepreneurship. As a matter of fact, it is one of the fundamental pillars of the business. Creativity can be used broadly in Entrepreneur A's field of business, for example in the work itself, different hair styles and techniques, interior design as well as in little details. In addition, utilizing creativity in social media channels is essential since it constitutes a major part of the business and may be most visible component to customers.

*"Creativity has a big impact. Creativity is one of the pillars of this industry. Creativity can be used in this profession, hair as well as interior design if you for example own your own hair salon. And also, in little details. And in social media you can use creativity and moreover you should use creativity because it covers most of the sales. After all, social media is something you give directly to the customer, so yes you are able to use creativity a lot."*



Entrepreneur A has always considered herself as creative. In her work she owns a rather unique style and an exclusive selection of techniques which to employ in her work. Creativity appears as her own unique working method, style and handprint which are difficult if not impossible to copy by others due to the fact that these are skills and approaches she has developed over time. In addition, her attention and appreciation of little details stimulates her observation skills and may result more easily in creative solutions.

*“I have always been a creative person. I have always enjoyed creating. Maybe creativity in me appears as my totally own style. I have my own style in providing services and I have my unique way in hairstyling, in my opinion. I don’t think there is anyone else who does the same as I do, at least not at this moment. In my opinion it’s not really possible to copy anyone’s style unless they are working for you or unless you’re teaching them to do the same kind of style. But when you create your own style, that’s where creativity manifests itself somehow. When thinking about myself as an individual creativity appears in such that I enjoy art and I appreciate little details and tiny creative gestures in various things.”*

Entrepreneur A believes that in her field of business, social media and marketing require creativity the most. This may derive from the fact that in the excessive quantity of marketing signals people get used to ordinary outputs rather quickly and hence organizations need to use creativity in their marketing strategy. Further Entrepreneur A states that constantly developing a distinct marketing way is essential in order to produce marketing messages which will be noticed by the audience. Due to the massive amount of marketing signals on a daily basis, most of the messages without any uniqueness get lost easily and will not reach the target audience. Therefore, the layout and the marketing style of a company need to be remarkable and special.

*“I think that maybe social media requires most creativity. Absolutely, marketing requires creativity the most nowadays. Marketing requires so much creativity*

*because people are so impenitent in what they see all the time and what they are being fed constantly. Customers have much higher demands nowadays... and they want something different. Something unique that the businesses can offer and it shows in their operation and marketing and services. Companies' messages get lost in the huge number of other signals. It's either the delivery or the style of the message with what companies manage to approach the customers."*

Further, Entrepreneur A considers that creativity is mostly in a person's personality. The environment may also have an effect on the level of creativity but, according to Entrepreneur A, creativity cannot depend on that. Instead, a person's personality is the most important factor in predicting creativity and should allow the person to be creative under any circumstances.

*"I think it's mostly about the personality. A person can be creative anywhere but sure the environment has an impact on creativity. I think that the environment should not affect a person's mind, happiness or creativity but moreover it should be about the person's inner will to develop and be creative. So, in a sense one should be able to be creative in the middle of the street, if you're working in a field of business that requires creativity. So little distractions should not affect a person's creativity because it is what comes from the inner-self and the personality."*

Moreover, Entrepreneur A remarks that money should not have an effect on creativity. Although some outcomes of creativity may require for example certain kind of material, the most significant prerequisite for creativity is yet a unique personality. Entrepreneur A lists that other possible sources of creativity are dreams, objects, self-development both in private and professional life, cherishing one's "inner child" by remaining free from ambient restrictions and having high standards.

In addition, she describes that in her work creativity is both social and individual. In her profession as a hair stylist creativity appears most prominently in contact with her customers. Lastly, Entrepreneur A emphasizes that although it is important to be creative, it is yet inevitable to have demand and customers who are willing to utilize those types of creativity and services she is offering.

*“I think it is both social and individual. Partially it relates – at least in my field of business – to people, but when thinking about my own creativity in other parts of life or other fields of business, it can also be individual that a person is working individualistically and developing something without others.”*

Entrepreneur B states that creativity shows in his work the most when he is making delicious food which is liked by their customers. Moreover, creativity is about offering services and products which are profitable for the business.

*“Well in my work creativity is such that I am able to make good food and people like it and that is really the outburst of my creativity. And then other factors are that I can utilize ingredients economically so that it is profitable and successful for the business, that’s how my creativity appears. And then the environment, our place is surrounded by a good feeling and that employees feel good and customers enjoy, that is part of the creativity too.”*

When planning the menu and deciding on particular dishes, creativity takes the form of testing, reflecting on other operators’ products and services in the market, becoming inspired by trends and innovations and investing in the looks of the servings to better appeal to customers’ feelings. After all, customers seem to appeal to things that look nice. Hence, another dimension of creativity appears in environmental factors such as creating a pleasant environment and a relaxed atmosphere in which both customers and workers enjoy being. In order to create an appealing atmosphere, physical surroundings,

interior design and the way food is served have major impacts on providing a pleasant customer experience.

*“Yes, it is very much about testing. And also following a little bit of what others are doing and through that find inspiration and get some influence on the exterior side too. It is actually bit of like art too, because people like to see nice things. So, the looks have a massive impact on the overall feeling. And it is not a bad idea to renew the looks every once in a while, and that also affects my own feelings and my way of doing things.”*

More specifically, Entrepreneur B states that creativity appears most prominently in customer service. In today’s business environment customers have more power and freedom of choice, and therefore each customer should be considered as an individual, different from the others. According to Entrepreneur B, restaurants do not really have a standard customer base anymore. Instead, customers represent a wide variety of individuals and hence he needs to use his professional know-how in considering every customer’s needs individually. Since there is no one-size-fits-all type of rule here, entrepreneurs need to use creativity in order to provide products and services which are desired by their customers. Entrepreneur B believes that creativity is essential in bringing more variety in each working day, contributing to the entrepreneur’s personal well-being as well as in remaining profitable and competitive in the market. Creativity is mostly required in urgent and unexpected situations such as when there is a shortage of food in the middle of the busiest lunch hour, major ingredients run out, appliances break down, or some other accidents occur. Entrepreneur B remarks that in these kinds of situations he needs to be creative and reconcile the situation with his best know-how in order to retain a positive atmosphere. Creativity is also important in relationships between partners, employees, and customers.

*“When we ran out of food in the middle of the lunch hour, that is definitely one of the situations when creativity was needed. You know when there are all of a*

*sudden thirty customers more than usually, you really need to be creative so that you can stretch out the ingredients and make sure there are enough of them. That requires creativity. Or then if there's something missing from the wholesale order. And so on, there are situations in which you notice that 'oh no', I need to come up with something and be creative. Or if something happens to the customer, even if it's something simple, when you're alone and someone makes a mess. Then you need to think creatively in the situation and resolve the issue in a way that other customers won't suffer from it."*

Entrepreneur B believes that creativity comes mostly within the person. However, other factors such as passion for what one is doing, communicating and doing co-operation with other entrepreneurs, observing what is happening in the market, and gaining new insights and ideas are effective ways to increase creativity. Most definitely, Entrepreneur B believes that creativity can be improved by acquiring more knowledge.

*"I think that if you're creative then you must be enjoying what you're doing. Then you're coming up with ideas and building the creativity around you and find that some kind of a thread. So yes, it is something that mostly comes from the person within. And passion is also part of that, passion for what you're doing, no matter what it is, whether it's work or sport, the creativity just appears there when you like what you're doing. And then the more you know about what you're doing the more creative you are. So, training is a good way to increase creativity. And also, what I think and what they always say that cooperation with other companies – for example these morning coffee events and what else there exists – this brings opportunities to get in touch with others and boost creativity, get new ideas, learn more about what others are doing, and what's happening."*

According to Entrepreneur C a creative person is someone who invents new ideas and develops existing patterns by using different kinds of methods and ways which have not been used before in a given situation. In her work creativity appears mostly in customer

service because people are different and one pattern does not fit them all. She emphasizes that as a physiotherapist she has to be able to consider rather complex factors when working with an individual and to utilize her professional background and knowledge in a creative way.

*“Well when thinking about my work in itself, creativity is absolutely continuous because people are different and situations are different so I need to continuously consider what is suitable for this individual because there’s no way the same pattern would fit all. And there can be really complex things that need to be considered. So yes, definitely it is required very very much in customer service.”*

In addition, Entrepreneur C needs creativity in marketing and creating content in company website and social media. Creativity is also required when bringing new products and concepts to the market. In fact, creativity is essential in the continuous development process because it is an excellent way to distinguish oneself from others.

*“Well first of all marketing and the content of marketing materials require creativity. And then the services because of course I want to stand out from the competitors, so I need to come up with something new or apply a fresh approach to an already existing thing.”*

However, what she considers even more important in creativity, is to maintain her own unique style and not to try something too extraordinary which may expel the established customer base.

*“But there hasn’t really been a need to come up with something absolutely revolutionary. Because I have my clientele, so I haven’t faced a situation in which I would have to distinguish myself. But nevertheless, there is constantly this urge of wanting to develop my business, but in my case it has been rather gradual than*

*rapid. And what needs to be bore in mind is that whatever it is what I do, it needs to go well with the company image.”*

Entrepreneur C states that there are individual differences in the creativity of different persons. Moreover, she believes anyone can be creative in their own way. However, certain mental resources are required in order to be creative. Entrepreneur C emphasizes that a certain level of alertness and not being burdened by too many stressors at the same time are prerequisites for creativity.

*“Clearly there are individual differences in a sense that others are more creative than the rest. But I’m quite sure that everyone can be creative but it requires mental resources and sufficient alertness and that too many things are not clashing in mind.”*

Investing on low stress-levels, overall well-being, capability and stamina are good ways to increase creativity. Also, searching for inspiration and additional knowledge by following other operators within the same field or even outside of the business are useful ways to improve creativity.

*“Well first of all a person needs to have enough stamina. Can’t be too stressed. Then also through becoming inspired. In a sense looking for some relating sources, whatever they might be. And have some kind of a base of knowledge and then check what others are doing and get ideas either from other operators within the same field or from something completely different.”*

Lastly, Entrepreneur C compares creativity both from an individual and social point of view. Running the business alone in her previous premises versus currently being part of a group of entrepreneurs in a co-working space has affected creativity significantly. She recalls that marketing was simpler and perhaps easier when operating alone because it was planned only for her own company. In turn, operating in the co-working space

marketing is more complicated and requires great collaboration skills because all of the entrepreneurs and their companies need to be considered equally.

Entrepreneur D considers creativity as openness towards new ideas and moreover, the ability to develop ideas into feasible and concrete forms which are beneficial and profitable for certain interest groups. Further, Entrepreneur D states that although an idea can be something nobody else understands yet the inventor has an exigency to resolve any obstacles and develop an idea into something beneficial and concrete. In his opinion, creativity requires having all senses and communication channels open for new inputs and ideas which may occur whenever and wherever. Currently their company is in a development stage in which they get ideas and influences from customers and the team then tries to figure out what do the customers actually need and which solutions would best suit their needs. According to Entrepreneur D this phase requires creativity within all four team members all providing their own point of views. Since his role is to meet with customers – both sellers and buyers – and find out what they need in practice he needs to become immersed in the customer's reality and truly understand the issue.

*“In our company I am the one who works in the customer interface. I visit both sellers and buyers, continually. That is one of the places where there is a chance to soak up the influences of the environment and those opportunities. There are concrete requirements expressed there so that I hear customers say ‘Oh how I wish there would be a way to do things in this way’. Creativity, in these situations is maybe coming to realize to ask why do you want to do things like this and try to find the root cause and try to understand the pain of the other person and understand his/her point of view.”*

This calls for listening to the customers and mediating the customers' comments as authentically as possible to the other team members. Entrepreneur D remarks that creativity requires the ability to question and challenge existing patterns. Moreover, a person



needs to understand that he or she has their own restricted point of view which needs to be expanded in order to come up with a creative solution.

*“The daily creativity appears in bringing the customers’ comments, as authentic as possible, in front of the whole team. So that we can harness the creativity of the team with its four members, since I’m really not the only one coming up with these ideas. When we see things in different light and four people are bombarding this one issue with their own ideas and perspectives we can utilize all of the creativity within the team.”*

Entrepreneur D explains that quite often group creativity is essential because one person alone might not be able to come up with an idea to resolve a complex problem. On the other hand, in cooperation, someone else might have additional information and together they may come up with a possible solution. Entrepreneur D emphasizes also that although an invention can be made in a person’s own head and sometimes that can already be developed into a profitable form, in many cases the idea is not ready for bringing it to the market without testing it first in some social context. In fact, he believes that the effort of a certain group of people who all bring their own knowledge and skills to the development process is essential in terms of creating useful and creative products. In their company sociality and interaction are essential. Although the idea for the platform came from Entrepreneur D and his friend, the development takes place between the team members, customers and overall needs of the market.

Entrepreneur D believes that diverse environments improve creativity. In an unusual environment a person is prone to different influences which are likely to broaden the perspective.

*“Well perhaps a childlike ability to question, since that is basically what restricts us. That I come from my own reality and background and observe the world from*

*a certain point of view with these particular eye-patches and have a limited perspective. So, it is important to understand my own limitedness.”*

In addition, he personally finds social interaction and truly understanding another person’s point of view as a good way to enhance creativity. Creativity may also occur through systematic work; a person can consciously try to resolve an existing problem by systematically coming up and going through various possible solutions. Entrepreneur D believes that people’s mind and language restrict the ability to view the broadness of life. This may derive from the built-in philosophy that comes within a certain language and inherited culture which steers the mind and distinguishes people with different backgrounds. Therefore, learning languages may help to broaden the way of viewing life and all of its nuances. Entrepreneur D also believes that using positively charged words will lead to more positive thinking because certain words have positive connotations.

Entrepreneur E relates creativity with solving problems. Personally, she does not consider herself as artistic so she would not associate creativity with necessarily having to be artistic. Moreover, creativity is inventing new ideas in a way that has not been used before. In her own work she mostly uses creativity when developing their product, the online platform. Whether it is about changing the design and outlook or adding new functions and features, considering the customer’s aspect in every step of their development process, is essential. After all, their company’s lifeline is to make the platform as user friendly as possible.

*“The most creative part of my work is everything relating to the development and building of our platform, since I’m not a coder I’m not the one who has to physically code these changes. But all the thoughts and ideas about new features, or changing the design or coming up with new qualities, is all part of the creative work.”*

Entrepreneur E believes that a person's tendency for being able to analyze issues from various aspects and solve problems is a prerequisite for creativity. Also, the environment has a significant impact on creativity. It is important to be courageous and think diversely. Moreover, what matters especially in team work, is to have an atmosphere where everyone can freely express even their most rudimentary ideas without them being tackled immediately.

*"I believe the first thing is to have a natural tendency for thinking creatively or solve problems. It may come from the person itself but I would also say that the environment has a huge impact on creativity. You can be as courageous as possible, but if you're working in a team in the field of creative work, the most important thing is to have an atmosphere in which you dare to say even the stupidest ideas out loud."*

Entrepreneur E notes that even small things such as someone in the team having a bad day affects the atmosphere significantly and hampers creative thinking and problem solving. In turn, being able to come up with new creative ideas requires that everyone in the team has an open mind, a good feeling and a good flow of thoughts to go through each proposed idea.

*"It's very easy to notice at the office if someone is having a bad day when we are trying to work creatively and come up with new solutions, so in order to really get ideas flowing requires that everyone is very open minded and having a good 'flow'."*

In terms of sociality Entrepreneur E states that when working on her own she considers herself being even more free, courageous and active in being creative. In contrast, when working in the team when someone else is always double checking whether the idea is really feasible, the chance of being creative may become more limited. On the other hand, working alone might feel rather insecure and intimidating when there is no one to

ensure an idea is really beneficial and worth trying. Entrepreneur E recalls that in the beginning of their entrepreneurial endeavor, creative work included more freedom in the thinking process and when brainstorming diverse ideas. Later on, after establishing a company with a customer base and a network of other business partners and stakeholders, the creative work has taken a more structured form. For example, certain problems are viewed and solved systematically in meetings in which the team sits down for a couple of hours and utilize a white board and sticky notes when brainstorming possible solutions to resolve an existing problem.

*“It has maybe varied within the different stages of the entrepreneurial process. In the beginning when we of course didn’t have anything concrete yet and we just had to come up with ideas and ponder on things and solve problems it was much freer, we were just trying to go through good ways to do the things we want to do. But later now that we have customers and partners and there is a company to run it has taken a lot more structured form. And now it works so that we have a problem and we give it a certain title and we decide to sit down for two hours and have a whiteboard and sticky notes and begin to brainstorm. But I must say nowadays it’s a lot more organized.”*

Working in a small team and having to deal with the pressure of coming up with a solution quickly creates a risk of abandoning an idea soon after it has been presented. Therefore, the team has mutually agreed to a condition of not being allowed to say ‘no’ to anyone’s idea in the first thirty minutes of a meeting. By this rule they want to retreat from being too critical towards new ideas and secure at least a minimum of time to consider everyone’s idea equally.

Entrepreneur E states that when maintaining creativity, it is important to try to control the stress level and avoid situations in which there is a coercion of having to come up with a creative solution within a short amount of time. After all, forcing is not a constructive way to invent creative ideas. Instead, it is essential to have enough time to innovate

creative ideas. In a situation where everyone in the team is supposed to be as creative as they can, the team gives up their normal working hours from eight in the morning to four in the afternoon and allows all the team members to work at a time they prefer. For some team members this means working at three in the morning, whereas others prefer working at regular office hours. All of the team members also try to invest in exercising and maintaining a social life by spending time with friends and having enough free time to recover from working hard. Although spending time outside of work may seem like prolonging completion of tasks, this actually appears as productivity and a good work flow.

Entrepreneur	Work tasks requiring creativity the most	Prerequisites for creativity	Ways to increase creativity
Entrepreneur A	Work itself, different hair styles and techniques, interior design, overall image of the company, marketing, social media	A unique personality	Dreams, objects, self-development, cherishing one's "inner child", having high standards
Entrepreneur B	Customer service, creating an appealing environment and atmosphere, unraveling unexpected situations	A certain type of personality	Passion, communicating, co-operation, observing, gaining new insights and ideas, training
Entrepreneur C	Individual customer service, marketing and creating content	Mental resources, certain level of alertness, not being burdened by too many stressors	Investing on low stress-levels, overall well-being, capability and stamina, searching for inspiration and additional knowledge by following other operators within the same field and outside of the business
Entrepreneur D	Collecting ideas and influences from customers and developing solutions which	Having all senses and communication channels open for new inputs and ideas, ability	Diverse environments, social interaction, understanding another person's point of view,

	best fulfil their needs.	to question and challenge existing patterns, understanding that a person has their own restricted point of view which needs to be expanded in order to come up with a creative solution, social aspect	systematic cerebration, learning new languages and cultures, using positively charged words
<b>Entrepreneur E</b>	Developing the online platform, ensuring that customers' needs are considered in every step of the development process	Being able to analyze issues from various aspects and solve problems, encouraging environment, open atmosphere, overall well-being, flow, enough time	Control stress level, avoid situations in which there is a coercion of having to be creative, investing enough time to innovate creative ideas, abolishing any unnecessary restrictions such as fixed working hours, doing physical exercising, maintaining a social life, allowing oneself enough time to recover

**Table 4.** Types of creativity invoked by entrepreneurial identity roles.

### 4.3 Types of play

Since another purpose of the thesis is to increase knowledge about the types of play entrepreneurs with different entrepreneurial identity roles utilize, this chapter introduces the data from interviews regarding play as an action and playfulness as a state of mind. Also, in this section the results of the interviews are presented in a table (see Table 5) to facilitate reviewing the data.

Entrepreneur A describes herself as playful for the facts that she is carefree, humorous, and also enjoys to share good humor with her customers. As types of play she uses practical testing on family members, friends and customers when exploring new techniques and hair styles. Moreover, she utilizes visualizing and idealizing when considering different scenarios and planning for future developments. Different types of play are used

both in preparing for upcoming projects as well as in deliberating about to which direction to steer the company in the future. Play has a central role also when creating and testing hairstyles on customers before a special event such as a wedding. Another type of play, imaginary training is utilized when preparing for challenging and manifold work task such as performing spectacular hair styles for bridal groups. Entrepreneur A utilizes also story-telling as part of the brand building. Since social media, and especially Instagram is considered to be the most effective marketing channel for her company, Entrepreneur A has divided stories posted on Instagram in different categories. These stories are presented in the form of short highlight videos based on different themes such as different hair coloring techniques, different hair styles and colors.

*“In social media I have utilized story-telling indeed. I have divided the stories there based on categories. I have done it so that three pictures reflect a certain theme. And if you follow the feed it really flows nicely and fits well together. In terms of Instagram I have highlighted for example certain color techniques so that it is easy to see those similar kinds of video clips in one place.”*

By providing a consistent and highly visual image of the company makes it is easier for the customers to find what they are looking for. Moreover, visual story-telling gives a united image of all the services of the company and gives Entrepreneur A a great opportunity to demonstrate her skills and style range.

Lastly, Entrepreneur A states that she uses play also as a recovery method. This type of play often emerges through hobbies and exercising. She believes that by doing something fun she is able to release her mind. This is essential in order to maintain herself playful. Moreover, she notes that play increases her creativity.

*“Yes play helps definitely in recovery. Free-time hobbies and searching for something lightening the mind, something fun and playful and maintaining the*

*playfulness in oneself. It is important not to take things too seriously. And I believe that it increases creativity.”*

In terms of coping in a competitive market situation, she rather utilizes logic than play. However, she considers serious play – play with a purpose – as an effective way to boost up creativity and therefore to facilitate remaining competitive.

Also, Entrepreneur B describes himself as playful. Playfulness appears by smiling often, being flexible and trying to remember that things are not so serious even when facing challenges. When talking about different types of play, Entrepreneur B utilizes most often mental preparation and mind mapping. He goes through challenging events in his mind, for example when preparing for large catering events. Thorough preparation requires managing the whole course of an event as well as paying attention to little details and preparing for any sudden changes.

*“Quite often I go through the next day in my mind, if I know there is something more laborious there to get through. So, kind of like mind mapping and going through every step in the process and making sure everything is taken care of. And especially these bigger catering projects need to be carefully mind mapped. Because it really supports the feeling that everything is in control and makes it easier to get through the day.”*

When considering the company’s core competence, cooking, play is used in the form of creating new innovative servings and testing these with a group of friends and customers. Sociality in testing new dishes is essential in order to get authentic feedback.

*“Yes, just doing and testing and tasting and letting others taste too. It’s the best way to get the best result. It really is a direct and rather objective feedback directly from the customer.”*



Overall, Entrepreneur B emphasizes that play is used for various reasons such as mastering challenging projects, renewing the menu, increasing sociality between the company and its audience, and improving entrepreneurs' well-being. Whereas having enough rest is essential in ensuring an entrepreneur's well-being, play also has many effects both in enabling required breaks for the mind and therefore in stimulating creative thinking. According to Entrepreneur B reading any kind of literature within the industry or outside of it helps to relax and may also be useful in terms of finding inspiration. He further explains that it is necessary for the brain to first relax before being able to create new ideas. Also, he finds it alleviating to discover other entrepreneurs' experiences and challenges and to be able to relate to these.

*"All kind of literature around this business and entrepreneurship helps a lot. It is easy to draw conclusions of it and get new ideas when you're reading something or magazines. At the same time, it relaxes and brings up new ideas. These series of books about entrepreneurship are also excellent because it makes it easy to relate to the other entrepreneurs' experiences."*

In terms of marketing, their restaurant does not have a carefully selected story or brand image they would strictly follow. Entrepreneur B explains that there is no urgent need for this because of being in the market for so long and gaining a regular customer base.

Although working in a serious industry and dealing with her customers' physical wellbeing, Entrepreneur C: She describes herself as playful by not taking herself or the business too seriously. She further describes herself as positive and humorous, although she admits that it is difficult to remain completely stress-free given the risks of entrepreneurship. However, she tries to control her stress-level and prevent it from getting prejudicial. Entrepreneur C believes that play is an effective way to reduce stress. The type of play she uses most often is visualizing. She visualizes in her own head especially when planning group exercise classes either alone or with a colleague. The process of visualizing a group exercise class consists of considering first of all the theme and purpose of the class.

*“Visualizing in my mind is indeed strong. I use it both when planning group exercise classes or courses and trainings, so at least in these areas visualizing is in a central point. I plan these either by myself or with a colleague. So, it is visualizing in mind but then also testing these in practice.”*

Further she defines the target group’s level of condition and considers any previous actions in case of a continuous group exercise course. Entrepreneur C states that creativity is required in coming up with inspirational workout plans and motivating exercises all the time. When visualizing a group exercise class, she also utilizes her own preferences, professional knowledge, and external sources of inspiration, such as Instagram in deciding about the specific movements she will include in the class. Instagram and other external inspirations are essential in creating new movements by herself. One of the most important phases of visualizing is testing the movements by herself and further trying to figure out how these could be done differently. Play in the form of Entrepreneur C physically testing new ideas is pivotal also when planning personal training programs and any other choreographies.

*“Creativity is required when having to come up with something new for the group exercise class. I utilize of course my professional knowledge, previous stuff that I have used, or apply new things, and find inspiration. For example, Instagram is a very good tool nowadays for that but quite often I just create it by myself when trying to do a movement differently or then realizing when I’m doing it that ‘Hey, this is actually a quite funny movement’.”*

Lastly, Entrepreneur C notes that playfulness is also important in marketing. Serious play is utilized in planning and creating playful and humorous marketing videos together with her colleague in order to market the company as a relaxed, cheerful, and easily approachable company offering professional physiotherapy services.

*“In marketing yes, I have used play, not by myself but with my colleague. With her we have actually done marketing in a rather playful manner, for example marketing videos. We have planned these to some extent but not too much to just retain the playfulness.”*

Not being playful would not fit the company’s status and the image she wants it to represent. After all, the company is actively trying to distinguish itself as a not-too-serious, not-too-clinical physical, yet highly professional service provider in the field of physiotherapy. Entrepreneur C explains that this is a specific marketing strategy of the company since typically physiotherapy businesses are combined with clinical and medical types of associations. Therefore, playfulness is extremely important for Entrepreneur C and her business.

*“Not being playful would definitely not fit the company image or my personality or the status of this company community we have here. It would not be like us at all. It would actually be the opposite of us. What I have done already by myself and what we are yet continuing with my colleague is to actively try to distinguish ourselves from too much seriousness and clinical which is quite typical in this field of business. Not saying that no one else has humor no, but when it comes to the marketing it is quite often something rather clinic.”*

Also, Entrepreneur D describes himself playful because he has the tendency of joking and sometimes loosen up completely. In addition, when working as a teacher at the university he tried to free the students from being too nervous in presentations by telling a joke on the edge of being appropriate or inappropriate. Entrepreneur D explains that the purpose of this was to set the level of being able to say pretty much of anything very low, so that students would relax and feel more comfortable in bringing up their own ideas.

*“I did an empirical observation that if I as a teacher, in a situation of a presentation throw a comment something like what is in the border of whether it is*

*something that is ok for a teacher to say. What I mean is saying something humorous that makes the students think about 'How can he say something like that, and if he can say that I should dare to say whatever I have to say in front of the class.' So, in a sense it is lowering the boundaries and walls of what is appropriate to say in these situations, and I have done it systematically in my teaching. Like provided such comments that they think that 'A teacher can't really say things like that.' and it's about joking, making such a joke that the students ponder on 'Can one really say something like that in a university?'. And it is done on purpose and in an entrepreneurial way in order to decrease the tension of the situation."*

In entrepreneurship Entrepreneur D highly appreciates team dynamics. In fact, some of his team mates are childhood friends and the team dynamics have developed throughout the years. The team uses humor in abundance and have an open atmosphere in which anyone can say whatever they want to. This type of environment enables joking and bringing up even the craziest ideas without anyone judging.

*"You know that feeling when you meet an old friend and you are just making dummy jokes and the other one knows exactly what you mean and others around might not get the point at all. So, it's kind of like that now in our group, that anyone can just make a comment about anything. And all of the comments are allowed and they are all considered as humor. And you can't possibly say a comment that bad that it would not cause laughter. And that is such a richness, bringing playfulness in our operation."*

Entrepreneur D emphasizes that although they work in a serious business, which benefits their customers and therefore is essential for them, they still sometimes joke about it without forgetting about the responsiveness of their role. The purpose of humor is to first and foremost ensure that every team member has a positive and open mind to consider diverse ideas as part of their business plan.

*“That although we are developing a service which brings tremendous customer benefit, it always just somehow takes the form of laughter and joking about those ideas of ‘Why would anyone want to do this when we can produce something so much better?’ And in a sense making rather raunchy jokes in the background but still we understand the value and seriousness that for someone this is essential. But it does help to release the creativity when there is really nothing we could not talk about.”*

Entrepreneur D explains that due to the fact that the team is working virtually from distance, they have agreed to have a three-day face-to-face meeting once in a month. These meetings fall into the category of serious play. The development weekend starts on Friday afternoon when they gather together at some location. First, they have dinner and talk through recent news in their personal lives. After dinner they go through what they have learned about their customers between their last and the present meeting. They go systematically through authentic comments and notes from meetings with customers, and together they try to understand what is the core message of the customers and what they actually need.

*“Once we have eaten we go through, we have an agenda for the weekend in a way that we first go through that what have we learned about our customers between this development weekend and the previous development weekend. And we go systematically through my customer work when I’m running out there in the field meeting with the customers and I’m taking notes. And then we go systematically through these. And this is also about that collecting authentic comments, that I mentioned before, that I have actually direct quotes of what the customer says. And then we talk through these and bring the social interaction to the picture and expand my personal limitedness and utilize the team’s ability to review these.”*

Entrepreneur D emphasizes that social interaction is essential in interpreting the customers' feedback since it is not always in the same line what the customers say and what they actually mean. Then they estimate what is the current state of their development process and decide what are the focus points for this particular development weekend. According to Entrepreneur D development weekends consist of about 30 hours of coding and taking regular breaks while they eat, exercise, go to the sauna, have some beer or soft drinks, and discuss freely about various topics. Moreover, some of the concrete creations the team utilizes are strategy tools, strategy maps, business model canvas, strategic groups, blue ocean strategy, SWOT-analysis, and competitor profiles.

*"And on Sunday we estimate whether we achieved our goal that we set on Friday. And this concept is repeated every time. And everything that happens between the coding and else is that we bombard these ideas from slightly different angles and discuss freely about various topics, and this repeats in every camp. And occasionally, and this relates to the serious play, now that I have this background of teaching and strategic management, we have a bunch of strategy tools that we utilize more or less regularly. For example, we have conducted business model canvas exercises, we have strategic groups, SWOT-analysis of the field from different perspectives, value canvas things, so blue ocean strategy's value elements that we have applied in our own situation and between our company and the competitors. And actually, the things what we should do now is a strategy map."*

The team also utilizes role play exercises. In role play the team members embrace the roles of their customers and other stakeholders, in a sense that for example one is the seller and another is the buyer. The team then proceeds by going through each stakeholder's point of view while gaining vital insights of their customers' needs.

*"So we are using these toys in our work. And now actually what just crossed my mind is we also sometimes play with roles. In a sense that 'Ok, you're now a professional buyer. And you work in a big media company and you're planning a*

*marketing campaign for Coca-Cola. So how do you use these tools here? And how do you go through each step of the process all the way from the registering.' So, in a sense it is user profile play and then another person can play the role of a seller and then we go through the process based on the user's experiences."*

Entrepreneur D states that the most significant purpose of play in their organization is to be able to prioritize their operations and to reach a mutual understanding within the group. The role of play is to enable such an open atmosphere and communication between the team members so that they all share the same point of view and they all agree on what is the most important current thing for the company.

*"I would say that the biggest purpose for this is to be able to prioritize what we are doing. That is the biggest. There might be two actually; prioritizing and then increasing our mutual understanding. So, when we perceive our doing, each one of us perceives it in the same way. And through that we can put things in the order based on their importance. Now that we are talking about a start-up environment in which we are still seeking a scalable business model that we can lock up, so in order to direct our scarce resources towards those particular things that we need to finish in the first hand, so it all comes down to these exercises, conversations, strategy tools that we utilize, and these serve especially the need to prioritize the most critical steps."*

Entrepreneur D explains that in a sense play operates as a facilitator to having a mutual language among the team members. It is vital to refer to different objects with the same terms and make sure that everyone understands each other.

*"The biggest asset of strategy tools is that the people who are gathering together to think about these things, from all parts of the company, the biggest benefit exists in producing a common language for that group. So that they are talking about the same things with the same terms. And understand better that 'Now*

*when this CEO says this about this subject, so ok this means then this and not the thing that I have there, so this term means something different to me but for him/her it means that.’ So, a mutual understanding that we understand each other better. So mutual language and prioritizing are also the most important things in our team.”*

Moreover, play has a central role in creating an atmosphere where everyone can bring up their own ideas. Further, this is a fact Entrepreneur D enjoys the most in their team. In addition to playful mindset it is necessary to remember not to blame a person for any possible mistakes. As a team they should rather pay attention to the circumstances under which the mistake occurred and take action in to prevent this problem from happening in the future.

Entrepreneur E does not describe herself as playful. For her being humorous and relaxed is different than being playful. Entrepreneur E explains that for her playfulness means being easily amused by things and finding joy in things that do not appear joyful or funny for a non-playful person.

*“No, actually no I don’t think I would describe myself with the term ‘playful’ if I had to, I would not describe myself as playful. It is a very good question that what is playfulness and of course I would like to associate it with that the person is humorous and relaxed but still somehow, I feel that it is something different than being playful. Playfulness is perhaps something that a person becomes amused and finds joy and laughter in the smallest and simplest things whether it’s, I don’t know, it appears an apple has a face amuses a playful person but doesn’t amuse a person who is not playful because that person doesn’t see that little detail in the same way.”*

However, as a form of play her team utilizes especially storytelling and creating a certain brand image for the company. They invest plenty of time and other resources in selecting



specific colors, feelings and thoughts that their company wants to signal on their web site and other marketing channels. In order to decide on these colors and other factors affecting their outward appearance, they try to get into a playful state of mind in which it is easy to play with different combinations and imagine the effects of each alternative. This type of action falls into the category of serious play because the team has a specific object it wants to achieve. In the brainstorming stage playfulness is inevitable since the team needs to achieve a certain state of mind in which every team member is open towards even the craziest ideas and everyone is free to express themselves.

*“That description of story-telling and building a company image sounds familiar. We use a lot of visual components. We have a brand we need to establish and affiliate it with colors and feelings and thoughts and in a sense reaching a consensus of these has required almost a playful way of working in which we juggle with various and different colors and ideas. So that feels the most playful thing we have done. Although the objective of this was everything but to play. And really just those moments when we are brainstorming about something, so those are the most playful moments in which everyone’s brains are free to throw whatever pops in their minds and all of these ideas are welcomed and only after that we estimate whether they could work or not.”*

Another form of play is utilizing different demo groups in which they test prototypes and new versions of their program in a test group of customer representatives. The first step in establishing a demo group is to identify individuals who fit in their target group. This is usually implemented via social media channels or through acquaintances. The team then creates a Facebook group in which they can post their new ideas and receive feedback whether they are feasible and beneficial before implementing any changes in practice and introducing it to the public audience. Utilizing several demo groups and testing new development ideas in practice is essential in order to make sure the changes will truly benefit their customers. With utilizing demo group testing the team wants to distinguish itself from those startups developing business ideas in secrecy.

*“Throughout our entrepreneurial process we have utilized several demo groups. We’ve had various Facebook groups for people who could fit into our target group. So, we have gathered these together for example from social media and through acquaintances and we utilize them when going through most of our development ideas. And whenever we have some new version we always first test it in these groups before launching it to the public.”*

Entrepreneur E believes that by not involving the end users already in the development phase, a startup may end up with a product which does not have a demand or existing customer base willing to pay for such product. Also, the team wants to avoid the risk of keeping ideas for themselves for too long and losing the opportunity to turn those ideas into profitable business. By utilizing prototypes and sociality ensures the fact of including the customers’ ideas and needs into the development process early on and helps the team to ascertain that there is a demand for this type of service and product in the market.

Entrepreneur E believes that different forms of play are mostly utilized in situations where it is hard for the team to maintain a good flow in the creative thinking or when they have reached a dead end in trying to solve a problem. In these situations, the team members often feel busy, stressed and desperate of coming up with actual results. Therefore, play is typically used when a problem or a situation needs to be dissolved or there is a need to get over any blocks in the creative thinking process. In turn, when things are flowing well, the team does not utilize play as much.

*“These are certainly most often used in situations when it feels like creativity is not flowing or there is much stress and hurry, whether it’s due a competitive situation or poor scheduling. But I would definitely say that it is mostly utilized to resolve a situation. It is a slightly different way to get ideas flowing. So, I’m guessing that when things seem to flow well, it doesn’t pop in mind to have a moment*

*when everyone is throwing ideas, but when it feels that ideas don't flow it is a way to overcome those blocks."*

Entrepreneur E states that launching new versions of the program requires creativity and typically causes stress and therefore these are often the occasions when they try to utilize play. Asking for help from other businesses, companies, entrepreneurs, and other social resources has an important role in developing their operations. Entrepreneur E notes that it would be important to make more cooperation with other professionals not only in the situations of distress but also in the effort of fostering creative capital when things are flowing well.

Entrepreneur	Playfulness appears in him/her as	Types of play	The purpose of play
Entrepreneur A	Being carefree, humorous, and enjoying to share good humor with her customers	Practical testing of new techniques and hair styles on family members, friends and customers, visualizing and idealizing, story-telling, imaginary training	Prepare for upcoming projects, deliberate about to which direction to steer the company in the future, create and test hairstyles on customers, build brand and entrepreneur image, recover, increase creativity
Entrepreneur B	Smiling often, being flexible and trying to remember that things are not so serious even when facing challenges	Mental preparation, mind mapping, innovating, testing, searching inspiration in various types of literature	Master challenging projects, renew, increase sociality, improve well-being, recover, relax, stimulate creative thinking, find inspiration
Entrepreneur C	Not taking herself or the business too seriously, being positive and humorous	Visualizing, practical testing, planning and creating playful and humorous marketing content	Reduce stress, increase creativity, internalize customer perspective and experience, build brand and entrepreneur image, find inspiration, differentiate from competitors

Entrepreneur D	Tendency of joking and making others feel relaxed by loosening up the situation	Brainstorming, strategy, business model and competitor profiles, role play exercises, joking, development weekend -concept.	Prioritize operations, learn from mistakes, reach mutual understanding, increase sociality, enable open atmosphere and communication, understand customers' needs, product development
Entrepreneur E	- (Does not describe herself as playful)	Storytelling, creating brand image, brainstorming, visual testing, prototype testing in demo groups	Increase sociality, ensure product demand, stimulate creative thinking, facilitate problem-solving, differentiate from competitors, diminish stress, foster creative capital

**Table 5.** Types of play utilized by entrepreneurial identity roles.

## 5 Discussion and implications

In this chapter the study will discuss the literature review and the findings of the interviews. In order to analyze the implications of the study systematically, the findings of the interviews will be reflected to the conceptual framework presented earlier. Starting with a discussion about the theoretical implications, the study later proceeds to analyze the findings of the interviews.

### 5.1 Theoretical implications

After introducing a profound literature review on the relationships between entrepreneurship, creativity and play, the thesis now discusses the variety of the types of creativity and play depending on each entrepreneurial identity role. Previous research has identified diverse entrepreneurial roles. This study utilizes the entrepreneurial identity roles clarified by Cardon et al. (2009). These consist of “inventor”, “founder”, and “developer” identity roles. The authors distinguish the roles from each other in a way that entrepreneurs identified mostly with the inventor identity are most passionate about “identifying, inventing, and exploring new opportunities”. In turn, entrepreneurs falling into the category of founders can be described as “establishing a venture for commercializing and exploiting opportunities”. Lastly, entrepreneurs who may relate with the developer identity can be considered as most interested in “nurturing, growing, and expanding the venture once it has been created”. In addition, Cardon et al. (2009) state that whereas people are motivated in trying to maintain their identity by engaging in activities and social situations that support their self-meaning, it is possible to shift from one entrepreneurial identity role to another. The authors further explain that although an entrepreneur may relate with various entrepreneurial identities simultaneously, one role is typically the most dominant over the others. Identifying oneself with one of the entrepreneurial identity roles supports a coherent and distinct self-perception of an entrepreneur. However,

gradual changes in one's entrepreneurial identity are possible and may occur in a lifetime. (Cardon et al. 2009: 516.)

Given the statement of Cardon et al. that entrepreneurs may shift from one identity role to another one according to the certain stages of the entrepreneurial process, the findings of the study are consistent with this. All of the interviewed entrepreneurs stated that all of the entrepreneurial identity roles are required in their daily work. Since all of the entrepreneurs are running small businesses, the ability to alter between different identity roles is even more required since the entrepreneur is him/herself in charge of the operations of the company. Entrepreneurs B, C, D, and E clearly indicate that in the very beginning of their entrepreneurial process the inventor identity was the most prominent one. Followed by the stage in which practical arrangements had to be implemented in order to establish a company these entrepreneurs recalled having to embrace a founder identity. Moreover, all of the entrepreneurs state that the developer role has to be more or less present in every step of the entrepreneurial process since it is the most important factor in remaining competitive.

## **5.2 Types of creativity invoked by entrepreneurial roles**

In this section the study discusses the types of creativity invoked by entrepreneurial roles. The empirical findings of the interviews are combined with the theoretical proposals in order to provide a coherent description of the variety of creativity invoked by each entrepreneurial identity role.

### **5.2.1 Motivational sources**

Previous research has indicated motivation as one of the most significant factors in creativity. According to Amabile (1997a) "Individuals are intrinsically motivated when they seek enjoyment, interest, satisfaction of curiosity, self-expression, or personal challenge

in the work. Individuals are extrinsically motivated when they engage in the work in order to obtain some goal that is apart from the work itself, or meet a constraint that is imposed by an extrinsic source". (Amabile 1997a: 21.) This study suggests that whereas motivation is an essential part in all of the entrepreneurial roles, an inventor might be more intrinsically motivated because creative thinking process and its outcomes cannot be forced and therefore it is less realistic to be extrinsically motivated and to have a certain object, such as opportunity recognition to be accomplished. Although opportunities may be searched on purpose, this process is yet rather challenging to manage and steer in the wanted direction at the wanted time due to the arbitrary aspect of discovering creative ideas. Instead, inventors are more likely to discover creative ideas through enjoying and being deeply immersed in an activity where they can express themselves and feed their curiosity by engaging in challenging tasks. According to Amabile, "although both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation may be present throughout a creative activity, they may be differentially important at different stages" (1997a, p. 23). Despite the fact that intrinsic motivation is undoubtedly present also in developer and founder identities, these roles may however be more prone to utilize extrinsic motivation in their entrepreneurial pursuits. Entrepreneurial processes such as development, growth and establishing entrepreneurial operations are usually aiming for certain goals. These roles may vary for example from achieving a leader place in the market, growing in revenue, launching new product and services, or establishing a certain imago. Due to the practicality and feasibility of these pursuits, the thesis proposes that founder as well as developer identities may benefit from extrinsic motivation in addition to intrinsic motivation.

All of the entrepreneurs note to be intrinsically motivated. However, entrepreneurs D and E did not mention monetary factors as part of their motivation, whereas entrepreneurs B and C explained that monetary compensations are part of their motivation. Entrepreneur A, with a combination of inventor/developer identity, stated that although in her occupation it is possible to determine her own salary, she made it very clear that money cannot be the motivation in her industry because customers will sense it and refrain from a service provider of such. The findings of the interviews are in line with the

theoretical conclusions in a sense that entrepreneurs D and E identify themselves with the inventor role. In turn, entrepreneur B identifies himself with a developer/founder combination role and entrepreneur C identifies herself with a founder role. Given the findings of the interviews, the motivation constructed entirely on intrinsic motivators of D and E can be explained through the groundbreaking inventors they have made. In fact, entrepreneurs D and E have invented unparalleled online platforms whereas entrepreneur A, B and C are implementing their own unique entrepreneurial endeavors in more traditional areas of entrepreneurship.

### **5.2.2 Knowledge in the creative process**

Creativity is also related to previously acquired knowledge. Whereas knowledge is required in all entrepreneurial identity roles, there are differences in the types of knowledge these roles utilize. For an inventor it is important to have the knowledge of relevant industries and to combine opposite elements in order to discover new creative ideas that can later develop into profitable business models and become novel and valuable innovations. It is essential to have a sufficient amount of background knowledge to steer the creative process, yet avoid any restrictions this may cause and retain an open mind towards extraordinary ideas. Another part of creativity is problem-solving. It is a conscious process where cognitive thinking skills are utilized to find a solution to a complex situation. According to Amabile (1997a) in the creative process, problem identification and response generation are the most significant influencers of novelty because in these stages diverse perceptions are most likely to emerge. In addition, since the type of motivation affects the process of cognitive thinking, problem identification and response generation are likely to require intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, in some stages of creative process where novelty is important but not vital, the synergistic motivators – a combination of both intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivators – are likely to become activated, especially in more routine-like tasks such as in the preparation stage or in communication. (Amabile 1997a: 23.) Since especially inventor and developer roles require diverse and novel insight in order to create something innovative, these identities are



likely to benefit from intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, founder role may consist of more routine-like work tasks, which may benefit from synergistic motivators. However, due to the systematic of problem-solving process the thesis proposes that problem-solving may be central also in founder and developer roles. Founders and developers may find obstacles, which need to be solved, in their endeavor to achieve goals. Although an inventor may become inspired by detecting a problem, instead of utilizing merely consistent thinking process, an inventor is likely to exploit imagination. Also, Fillis and Rentschler affirm this aspect by stating that “Creative adaptation concerns the reworking of existing ideas and concepts, while innovative creativity relates to the invention of new and different ideas” (2010: 55 – 56). Whereas an inventor can be seen as creating novel ideas and therefore utilizing innovative creativity, a developer is involved with already existing business ideas that require creative adaptation. In turn, a founder falls somewhere in between these two types of creativity since the ideas have already been discovered in the invention phase yet they need to be established by utilizing novelty since there is no previous experience available.

The findings of the study are consistent also with the different types of knowledge distinct entrepreneurial identity roles utilize. As stated previously, entrepreneurs D and E with an inventor identity seem to have the relevant knowledge of various sources to combine the doctrines of these in the invention. However, as entrepreneur D stated, he nor his team mates had any experience of the media industry prior to their business idea. This emphasizes the need for having an open mind and avoid becoming restricted by previous knowledge. On the other hand, for example entrepreneur B with a developer/founder identity stated that flexibility and adaptability are essential skills in his work confirming the theoretical statement that founders and developers are more prone to face obstacles in their work that require problem-solving skills. Similarly, entrepreneur C with a founder identity noted that she uses her professional knowledge first and foremost in finding individualized treatment options for her customers. This procedure can be referred to problem-solving since each customer requires a unique treatment plan and there is no one universal set of treatment.

### 5.2.3 Proactive and responsive creativity

According to Fillis and Rentschler (2010) there are three dimensions of entrepreneurship: “innovation, risk-taking and proactiveness”. Innovation can be defined as the discovery of new ideas and turning those into profitable business opportunities. The authors highlight that the novelty of these ideas is not sufficient enough alone since the successful outcomes of these ideas play a major part also in innovation. In turn, risk-taking refers to the ability of a person to invest in opportunities which require a significant amount of resources but are estimated to generate great profit. The third dimension defined by Fillis and Rentschler is proactiveness which describes a person’s persistency and ability to both adapt to new situations as well as diverge from the prevailing paradigms. (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 50.) Based on these dimensions of entrepreneurship, this study suggests that innovation is mostly related with the inventor identity. Risk-taking, on the other hand may be mostly connected with the founder identity since it is most likely the first step of the entrepreneurial process in which the entrepreneur has to decide whether the business opportunity is worth for the risk of losing valuable resources in case of an entrepreneurial pursuit failure. Moreover, the developer role is also related to risk-taking in some degree, when considering new entrepreneurial pursuits in an existing business context. Proactiveness may also relate to the developer identity since the development phase especially requires perseverance, adaptability and diversity from the entrepreneur.

Moreover, Fillis and Rentschler (2010) have identified different types of creativity. The first one called responsive creativity refers to a situation in which a person’s reaction to a problem appearing is externally shaped. The second one, expected creativity takes place when an individual is extrinsically motivated to discover a creative solution to an existing problem. In turn, contributory creativity means that a person participates in the creativity process although he or she does not have the obligation nor liaison to the task. Lastly, proactive creativity refers to a situation where a person is intrinsically motivated to find a solution to a problem. Moreover, the authors present that entrepreneurship is mostly related to this last type of creativity. (Fillis & Rentschler 2010: 69.) The thesis

suggests that whereas proactive creativity best describes the type of creativity employed in entrepreneurship, also contributory creativity may be required, for example in the inventor role. Moreover, other categories of creativity may be useful in other stages of the entrepreneurial process. Responsive and expected creativity may for example be required in the roles of founder and developer. Founders and developers are for instance expected to exploit creative ideas in order to make profits as well as to react to an appearing problem and to steer the business into a new direction in order to avoid any risks threatening the entrepreneurial pursuit.

According to the interviews, all of the entrepreneurs apply proactive creativity since they are motivated mostly by intrinsic factors. However, for example entrepreneur B, C and E discussed about utilizing various social connections outside of their company to increase their creativity. The study suggests that these types of optional interactive events may be referred to as contributory creativity. Entrepreneur B mentioned that there are some collaboration events for entrepreneurs and although their company has been restricted by timely matters to participate in these on a regular basis, he encourages every entrepreneur to take advantage of these creativity boosting opportunities. Entrepreneur C is a private entrepreneur but shares business premises and collaborates with other entrepreneurs to gain more creativity and resources. Although entrepreneur C remarks that sometimes working in a collaboration with other entrepreneurs may complicate and hinder the decision-making process, she still considers the benefits of the collaboration more significant than the disadvantages of it. Entrepreneur E discusses about demo groups their company utilizes in the development process of the product and as part of their problem-solving process. She further remarks that these collaborative events could be utilized more as part of their basic operations, not only when facing a problem. In addition, entrepreneur E mentions that their company receives help from various other companies and business professionals and mutually they offer help when possible to other entrepreneurs.

Lastly, all of the entrepreneurs consider that creativity is most prominent in customer relationships. Creativity appears in the ways of making sure that the services and products are really based on customers' needs. Customers are considered as individuals and it is essential to be able to provide customized services. Due to the fact that every customer is unique, creativity is highly required in order to secure a profitable business model which has a customer base willing to pay for those services.

### **5.3 Types of play invoked by entrepreneurial roles**

In this section the study discusses the types of play invoked by entrepreneurial roles. The empirical findings of the interviews are combined with the theoretical proposals in order to provide a coherent description of the variety of play invoked by each entrepreneurial identity role.

#### **5.3.1 The purpose of play**

As presented previously in the thesis, play is an effective influencer of creativity. Moreover, "Play and playfulness have repeatedly been suggested to promote learning and performance, also in environments traditionally not connotated with play" (Heimann & Roepstorff 2018: 1). Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) have stated that the more complex a work task is, the more analytical problem-solving, knowledge processing, resilience and experimentation a person will be required, and therefore, the more a person is likely to exploit play in order to complete the task. Consequently, a person with a high degree of independency in his or her work, is likely to have more opportunities in influencing the course of action and in determining which strategy to employ when approaching new challenges. (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 109.) Further, since play creates space and freedom to retreat from external restrictions and plasticity in an unpredictable environment, it is liable to prosper in an entrepreneurial setting.

When considering different dimensions of play such as “play as progress”, “play as power” and “play as self” (Rieber 2001: 5), this study suggests that “play as self” may relate mostly to the inventor identity. “Play as self” refers to the experiential aspect of play. Whereas all the entrepreneurial identity roles are likely to utilize personal experiences as the source of their inspiration, it is most unlikely for an inventor to displace the effect of “play as self” in the creative process. This is because personal experiences are typically the triggering event for creative thinking process. In turn “play as power” signifies the competition aspect in play and may relate mostly to the founder identity. The founder role falls in between the creativity and development process making competition, in a sense, the most central in this role. When establishing business operations, the founder must defeat all the other possible competitors in the market. Also, in case the business pursuit is the very first of its kind, the founder must overcome the objections claiming that the creative idea is too ambitious to turn into a profitable business. Whereas the developer deals with competition too, this study however emphasizes the “play as progress” aspect of the developer identity when guiding the business into a new direction.

The findings of the interviews are in line with the different dimensions of play. Entrepreneurs D and E who identified themselves with an inventor role utilized play in the very beginning of their entrepreneurial process mostly as a way to evaluate various business ideas and scenarios. This may refer to “play as self” since the innovative business idea in both cases was triggered by personal experiences. In fact, the ideas of both entrepreneur D and E were discovered by systematic thinking process in which personal experiences were reflected by the surrounding reality. Moreover, “play as power” refers to competition. Entrepreneur C with a founder identity mentioned that being playful is an essential way of distinguishing her company from others. Indeed, as the physiotherapy industry is typically related to being clinical, showing a more playful side of the industry is a valuable asset in remaining competitive. Since all of the entrepreneurs believe that constant development is essential for any kind of entrepreneurship, “play as progress” may be related to the various types of play utilized by all of the entrepreneurs.

### 5.3.2 Dimensions of playfulness

Proyer (2017) has defined different types of playfulness. First, “other-directed playfulness” refers to the relationship aspect of social interaction in various contexts such as at school or work, in friendship or hobbies and so on. Secondly, “lighthearted playfulness” relates to the ability of adapting into new situations, coping with stressors and analyzing different strategies to overcome any obstacles. Although many features of the lighthearted playfulness are considered as highly positive coping methods, this type of playfulness is also connected with excessive risk-taking. Thirdly, Proyer (2017) denotes “intellectual types of playfulness” referring to the need for intellectuality for example in innovation, cognitive processes and problem-solving. The fourth type of playfulness is “whimsical playfulness” which denotes that these types of individuals are typically great observers of their surroundings, have the ability to transform these occasions into amusing experiences and have the preference for extraordinary objects. (Proyer 2017: 121.)

These types of playfulness can be associated with the entrepreneurial identity roles. Since “other-directed playfulness” can also indicate the quality and duration of a relationship, the thesis proposes that this type of playfulness may be relevant especially in the developer role. Entrepreneurial pursuit is a progress which develops within time. Although an entrepreneur may act mostly alone, he or she is yet constantly interacting with others and these relationships will become significant when considering the development opportunities of the business. “Lighthearted playfulness” on the other hand may easily relate to several entrepreneurial identity roles. In fact, lightheartedness towards challenges and stressful situations as well as the ability to discover a strategy to cope with these negative situations are required in all entrepreneurial roles, especially in founder and developer identities due to the practicality taking place in these realities. Founders and developers may also be more prone to take risks compared to inventors who less often need to bear aggravating outcomes of creative idealization. Lastly, the thesis suggests that whereas both “intellectual types of playfulness” and “whimsical playfulness” are required in all entrepreneurial roles, different variations of these may be required in certain entrepreneurial roles. Innovation may for example be relevant in

the discovery phase of creative ideas and when developing the business. In turn, whereas cognitive and problem-solving skills are necessary in all entrepreneurial roles inventor and developer roles may demand more abstract thinking whereas founder role may yearn more concrete thinking.

During the interviews most of the different types of playfulness determined by Proyer (2017) were present. First, the study suggests that as all of the entrepreneurs utilize social relationships, whether interaction inside and outside of their organization, they all employ “other-directed playfulness” in their daily entrepreneurial endeavors. Second, “lighthearted playfulness” may be utilized especially by entrepreneur C and D. Entrepreneur C states that although operating in an area of business offering physiotherapy services and dealing with customers’ health, the most distinguishing aspect of the company’s image is being playful. Moreover, entrepreneur D explains that despite of working with an online platform providing essential advantage to the media industry and constantly adapting to a new situation with no remarkable experience prior to starting a company, he has a preference of occasionally loosen up in order to free the mind from restrictions. Third, “intellectual types of playfulness” may be mostly utilized by entrepreneur E since playfulness is part of their cognitive process in the form of utilizing demo groups in the development of their product. Moreover, entrepreneur E states that demo groups are utilizes most often in situations in which the team faces challenges they find difficult resolving without the contribution of the customer insight. Fourth, entrepreneur A may seem to employ mostly “whimsical playfulness” since she has the eye for little details other may not pay attention to. Moreover, entrepreneur A emphasizes the need for high-quality customer service and considering the customer as an individual with specified needs. Entrepreneur A denotes that not only the customer’s individualistic requirements need to be fulfilled but moreover she is expected to show interest towards the customer as a person.

### 5.3.3 Play as the daily entrepreneurial actions

As discussed previously in the study, play is the more practical influencer of entrepreneurship compared to creativity. Instead of considering play merely as a purposeless action, serious play can be defined as a form of play which has an objective to accomplish (Schulz, Geithner, Woelfel & Krzywinski 2015: 326). When considering play as a concrete mediator of creative ideas which can be further implemented as entrepreneurial pursuits, it is relevant to consider the toolkit-based modelling. Schulz et al. suggest that “manual toolkit-based modelling, using for instance crafting paper and cardboard or toy building blocks in a goal-oriented but playful way (serious play), foster the emergence of innovation in heterogeneous groups” (2015: 323). Although this relates more explicitly to an organizational setting in which a group of employees with a variety of skills are brought together to discover new innovative ideas, the study considers this as useful method in entrepreneurship as well. Physical creations of the toolkit-based modelling may be specifically useful in the inventor and developer roles. Concrete objects may for example help to understand better the otherwise highly imaginative and conceptual thinking process and may facilitate the transformation of these ideas later into actual products. Moreover, since visual arts rather exclusively produce detectable objects, storytelling provides more “explanatory and communicative power” to the conception, since after all “it is the story which gives the model its meaning” (Schulz et al. 2015: 325). Therefore, storytelling as a form of play may be useful for example in those stages of the entrepreneurial process, where creative ideas need to be convincingly explained to others.

The findings of the interviews indicate that ‘serious play’ has a more established standing in the entrepreneurs’ daily tasks than ‘play’. This may derive from the fact that play is not typically considered as part of an entrepreneur’s daily actions. Although serious play is not fully acknowledged of the interviewed entrepreneurs either, it seemed that the concept of serious play was however easier to realize. However, all of the entrepreneurs utilized types of serious play in their daily actions although they did not consider these actions necessarily as ‘playful’. Concrete objects as the outcomes of testing and



reviewing distinctive scenarios were utilized by all of the entrepreneurs in the development process. These concrete objects varied for example from testing different hair styles, dishes and prototypes of the product to physical body movements and strategic tools. Moreover, storytelling was utilized particularly by entrepreneur A, C and D as part of the company image they want to indicate.

Kirzner categorizes entrepreneurs in groups of “innovators” and “responders” (2009: 148 – 149). This study suggests that while innovators can be referred to as inventors and developers, the responders fall in the same category as founders. Indeed, an inventor typically discovers the initial business idea to endeavor whereas the developer continues the developmental work after an innovation has been launched. In turn, founder takes place after either one of these phases in order to secure the execution of these creative ideas in practice. Whereas innovators may be required to use creativity and innovation as their main strength in discovering new opportunities, responders, on the other hand, may be fostered to utilize play as the tool for problem solving and predicting the future of the market. Moreover, a developer must have a good comprehension of the future movements in the markets in order to know to which direction to steer the organization. A founder needs to have great problem-solving skills in order to conquer practical challenges. In addition, a founder must also have risk management skills and may use play in order to come up with the best strategy to avoid challenges. Risk management skills are best developed through analyzing and practicing various scenarios in order to be prepared to have an appropriate plan of action in any threatening situation. Moreover, these skills may be practiced through play because it provides a safe and stimulating environment to experience and learn from mistakes (Mainemelis & Ronson 2006: 100).

Due to the fact that the entrepreneurs who mostly identified themselves with a founder identity however did not exclude the role of a developer as part of their entrepreneurial identity, the study cannot clearly distinguish the interviewees between innovators and responders. However, it is evident that each entrepreneur in the stage of establishing their company had to embrace the founder role and utilize their problem-solving skills

in order to respond to the challenges induced by the surrounding environment. Similarly, as part of the constant development process creativity encouraged by playfulness is required in order to come up with new innovations.

Kolb and Kolb (2010) have also affirmed that play is an effective way to adapt into new situations. When considering playful action among children, the authors state that; “In the epistemic period of play, the children’s attitude is that of seriousness and focus, followed by intense, attentive investigation of all aspects of the toy. Once their investigation is over, they then proceeded to handle the toy playfully. As children transitioned to the ludic mode, in a relaxed manner they proceed to apply the knowledge gained through investigation in their play”. (Kolb & Kolb 2010: 29.) Despite the fact that this knowledge was discovered when examining playfulness in children, this study suggests that whereas inventor and developer identities may benefit from ludic type of play, founder identity may complement mostly from epistemic period of play. “Epistemic behavior is essentially characterized by efficient, economical and goal specific behavior, whereas ludic behavior concentrates on means rather than ends” (Kolb & Kolb 2010: 30). Inventors and developers are more prone to utilize ludic type of play in their work since they are likely to use their personal experiences as the inspiration of new creative ideas. Inventors and developers may have more room for ludic play, especially in the process of discovering creative business opportunities. Founders, on the other hand, require more accuracy in their work and may therefore advantage the epistemic period of play in which every aspect of the business pursuit is carefully considered.

Lastly, all of the entrepreneurs apart from entrepreneur E considered themselves as playful. However, entrepreneurs A, B, C and E did not really consider “play” as a part of their job or would not describe certain functions as playful actions prior to the interview. Overall, the entrepreneurs considered play as a difficult aspect of their work to determine and analyze. Although utilizing play in their daily actions, the study confronted the reality that play is hardly acknowledged in entrepreneurship. Whereas the study indicated that

the entrepreneurs utilize play for various of reasons, one of the rallying points was that all of the entrepreneurs utilize play as a way to increase creativity.

## 6 Conclusion

Write a short introduction. This chapter will discuss about some theoretical and entrepreneurial contributions. Moreover, it is necessary to consider the limitations of this study and give some proposals for future research about what should be further studied of the relationship between entrepreneurial identity roles, creativity and play.

### 6.1 Theoretical contributions

The objective of this study was to analyze which types of creativity and play different entrepreneurial roles invoke. After a profound literature review on the key themes of the thesis – entrepreneurship, creativity and play – the relationships between these themes as well as various types of creativity and play were introduced. In terms of distinct entrepreneurial identity roles, the thesis utilized a conceptual model of the experience of entrepreneurial passion by Cardon et al. (2009). In order to increase the accuracy of this analysis the thesis considered entrepreneurial identity roles together with different stages of the entrepreneurial process. As a conclusion, the thesis presents that although it was possible to make some indicative and theoretical propositions of the relation between certain entrepreneurial roles and various types of creativity and play, and the empirical findings of this particular context are in line with the propositions, further empirical research is yet required to verify these findings. Since entrepreneurship is a complex area of business due to its diversity and novelty, its various forms are challenging to determine. Moreover, the facts that entrepreneurial identity roles are highly contextual, depend on various personal predispositions, and are subject to change according to the situation, increase the challenge of providing unambiguous determination.

Despite of some of the limitations, this study has contributed to the theoretical knowledge of the topic by reinforcing the relationship between the roles within the triangle. First of all, through careful literature reviews on entrepreneurship, creativity, and play the thesis has emphasized the effects of these features on successful

entrepreneurship. Second of all, the study has elaborated on the knowledge available about entrepreneurial identity roles by considering various types of creativity and play invoked by these distinct roles. Third, the study has tested these theoretical proposals in a particular context of five entrepreneurs from various fields of business. For the most part, this study serves as a platform for future studies to centralize more deeply into the practical and more generalizable aspects of distinctive entrepreneurial roles and different types of creativity and play.

## **6.2 Entrepreneurial implications**

As remarked before, it is challenging to define an entrepreneur with one distinct entrepreneurial identity role due to the broad scope of the roles entrepreneurs typically need to embrace in the gradual development processes of their companies. Despite the lack or generalizable findings of this study, the results may however have entrepreneurial contributions. Due to the fact that the research of entrepreneurial identity roles' impacts on the behavior of entrepreneurs is yet rather scarce, this study has contributed to the practical implications of the relationship between entrepreneurial identity roles and creativity and play.

This study has contributed to entrepreneurial implications in a way that entrepreneurs may learn from each other by reflecting their own experiences on the ones presented in the thesis. Although the entrepreneurs participating in this study were all operating in the same country, the findings may however have international implications. In fact, many of the entrepreneurs mentioned that although they do not currently have international operations, the type of the company and field of industry of some entrepreneurs is yet such which could be operated in an international context.

### 6.3 Limitations and future research

Although the study was able to provide relevant associations between certain entrepreneurial roles and the variations of creativity and play based on previous research, these connections were difficult to define due to the contextuality of these entrepreneurial roles. Moreover, the empirical findings provided a more precise description of the types of creativity and play different entrepreneurial identity roles invoke in practice. However, since entrepreneurs are likely to make decisions based on their personal understanding and interpretation of the situation it is challenging to generalize the findings of this study as such in another context. Nevertheless, the purpose of this thesis was to provide an in-depth analysis of the types of creativity and play the participating entrepreneurs utilize. Due to the explorative and contextual approach utilized in this study, it lacks a broader aspect in the analysis of diverse forms of creativity and play invoked by entrepreneurial roles. In addition, due to the lack of relevant literature on creativity and play in entrepreneurship, this study has utilized research within these subjects in the organizational context. Whereas the findings of organizational entrepreneurship may be converted and utilized in the entrepreneurial setting, to some extent, the study may be limited to employ information which has not been verified in the entrepreneurial context. Since, entrepreneurship is however distinct from organizational features, this may have limited some of the inferences of the study.

Moreover, since creativity and play as concepts are yet rather untapped in everyday business, it is challenging to define these. Although creativity and play undoubtedly are widely used in entrepreneurship and may have a significant effect on the successfulness of entrepreneurial endeavors, the lack of research of these concepts entails the problematics of explicitly defining these concepts. Especially play or playfulness are not typically integrated to business or entrepreneurship. Whereas business and entrepreneurship are perceived as serious, professional, and logical balance between the market powers, play and playfulness are more often compounded with non-serious, childish, and purposeless action. Therefore, creativity and play are rather challenging to research due to the fact that these concepts are not typically acknowledged in every-day life of

entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs do not use the terms of creativity and play when describing these types of work tasks. According to the findings of the interviews it seems that there is no need or time to label these functions as creative or playful in the busy and adaptive life style of entrepreneurs. Hence, there is a risk that the interviewees understand play and playfulness differently or may not even acknowledge play as an influencer in business. This risk was remarked before conducting the interviews and avoided by carefully explaining what these concepts refer to in the context of the thesis. Moreover, delimiting the scope of the thesis merely on creativity and play may have reflected the researcher's personal values. This limitation can however be argued by the need of narrowing down the focus of the study to a couple of relevant concepts. With a too broad focal point accurate proposals are difficult to generate.

Lastly, since the entrepreneurial identity roles of the interviewees are based on self-evaluation, there is a risk that these roles would be indicated differently by an outsider. Despite the fact that the purpose of this study was to provide subjective insight of the entrepreneurs' personal opinions, this may harm the accuracy of the defined roles of *inventor*, *founder*, and *developer* identities.

Therefore, as a future research proposal it would be useful to define entrepreneurial identity roles more precisely by using both self-evaluation and external determination methods. Future researchers should consider dividing entrepreneurs into different entrepreneurial identity categories. It would be also interesting to consider more carefully entrepreneurs in different stages of the entrepreneurial process. This could be implemented for example by interviewing entrepreneurs who have abdicated their companies after achieving a certain stage of the entrepreneurial process. In other words, it would be interesting to view entrepreneurs who take the lead of a company in order to come up with a profitable business idea, establish the company or to further develop it.

Another proposal for future research was brought up in one of the interviews. This proposal encourages to view more carefully the impact of the size of the company on

creativity and play. In other words, it might be necessary to study at what point of the growth of a company creativity starts to decrease and utilizing play becomes scarcer. The hypothesis of such study might be that the bigger the organization grows the stiffer it gets in being creative and playful.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Questions used in the semi structured interviews

- Background information
  - Background of the company (industry, age, number of employees, countries of operations...)
- Entrepreneurship
  - How did you become an entrepreneur? (How did you come up with your business idea?)
  - What is the most entrepreneurial aspect of your personality?
  - How would you describe yourself as an entrepreneur (inventor, founder, developer)? If you can identify yourself with several identities, how do these vary? Do they shift from one identity to another for example together with the stages of the entrepreneurial process?
  - What does it take to be an entrepreneur? (A certain kind of personality, mentality, capabilities, resources, ideas...)
  - What motivates you in your work? (The area of business in itself, personal challenge, being the best/only provider in the market, money, having a certain status, the lifestyle that comes within the entrepreneurial role...?)
  - What is the meaning of creativity in entrepreneurship? Does an entrepreneur need to be creative? Can an entrepreneur be successful without creativity?
- Creativity
  - How would you define creativity? What is the opposite of creativity?
  - Would you describe yourself as creative? Please explain why and how does your creativity show.
  - How does creativity appear in your work? Which areas/work tasks require creativity?
  - Do some task require more creativity than others?
  - What is needed in order to be creative? (Any prerequisites such as resources, inspiring environment, motivation, incentive, reward, social interaction...?)
  - What kind of knowledge you need in your creative work?
  - How can creativity be increased/enhanced?
  - What kind of value does creativity bring to your organization?
- Play/playfulness
  - How would you describe play/playfulness?
  - Would you describe yourself as a playful adult?
  - Do you use play in your own work? If so, how? (Different dimensions of play: play as progress, play as power, play as self)

- What kind of form of play? (serious play, testing, scenarios, preparation, visualizing, idealization, physical creations such as crafting and building, explanatory forms such as storytelling...)
- For what? (problem-solving, divergent thinking, boosting up creativity, coping method, recovery... Do you play alone or with someone?)
- What is the value of play in your work? (What would your business be missing without play? → would it affect the creativity, motivation, ability to solve problems, recovery process...?)
- What are the requirements for play? (What is needed in order to play?)
- Do some tasks require more play than others? Why?